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THE  
OLD TESTAMENT  
IN THE  
SUNDAY SCHOOL

PRINCIPAL A.E. GARVIE, M.A., D.D.



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THE  
OLD TESTAMENT  
IN THE  
SUNDAY SCHOOL

— BY —

ALFRED E. GARVIE, M.A. (Oxon.) D.D. (Glas.)

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**To the Sacred Memory**

OF MY FRIENDS,

REV. W. F. ADENEY, M.A., D.D.,

and

REV. W. H. BENNETT, LITT.D., D.D.,

who were fellow-workers

in making the results

of Biblical Scholarship

available for Sunday School Teachers,

and who passed into the Unseen

almost side by side,

I DEDICATE

THIS ENDEAVOUR TO CONTINUE THEIR WORK.

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## PREFACE.

**I**T is a practical necessity which has led me to venture into a field in which I cannot claim to have laboured as in some other fields of study.

As Chairman of the British Lessons Council I have had many proofs of a growing aversion to the Old Testament lessons included in the British Graded Courses, not from teachers who shun the toil which adequate preparation would involve, but from teachers whose intelligence is keen, and who feel the difficulties of teaching from the old traditional standpoint, but have not been able to overcome these difficulties by reaching the new critical standpoint. I have never regarded it as my function to discuss these critical problems, unless as their false solution hinders—or their true helps—the preaching or the teaching of the Gospel. This is here my sole motive. On the one hand I have no desire to cause anxiety or perplexity to any Christian believer for whom such problems have no existence. On the other hand, I do desire not only to retain the teaching of the Old Testament in the Sunday School, but also to secure that it shall be taught by every teacher with certainty of conviction. How far I have succeeded in avoiding offence on the one hand, and affording assistance on the other it is for the readers to judge.

*New College,  
London.*

ALFRED E. GARVIE.





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## INTRODUCTION.

### I.

THERE have been two extremes in the attitude of the Christian Church towards the Old Testament, both of which in the interests of Christian faith itself must be avoided.

(i) On the one hand, Marcion and the Gnostics, impressed by the contrast of the New and the Old Testament, rejected the Old Testament altogether. In subsequent chapters two reasons will be discussed against this conclusion, viz., the continuity of the divine revelation in the Hebrew nation and Jesus the Christ, our Lord, and the value, both religiously and morally, of the Old Testament for the Christian to-day.

(ii) On the other hand the Christian Church generally has accorded an equal value to the Old Testament and the New, and has not recognised the difference of the authority of the preparatory and the completing revelation. An allegorical method of interpretation helped to ease the difficulties of the position; the New Testament was read into the Old. At the Reformation a more dogmatic use was made of the Old Testament—as in the system of Calvin—with the result that the Gospel was obscured by the Law, and even the conception of God received a content not given in the perfect revelation of the Father by the Son. A Judaistic

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legalism invaded the Christian Church, and the freedom of the life in the Spirit through faith in the Son was lost. One Reformed Council went so far as to declare that even the vowel points, which were not introduced by Jewish scribes into the Hebrew text till several centuries after the Christian era began were inspired. To support this dogmatic authority of the whole Bible theories of inspiration were invented, for which the Bible itself offers no justification, and which are in contradiction with the facts, historical, literary, psychical, moral, and religious, which the Bible itself presents to an impartial student and interpreter.

(2) What modern Biblical scholarship, against which many Christians are prejudiced because misinformed, aims at is nothing else, and nothing less or more than to get behind all dogmatic assumptions, to the Bible itself, so that it may speak for itself as to its origin, nature; authority, and value. It seeks to remove the hindrances to a knowledge and a judgment of the Bible as it is, which the differences of time and place, and all those other resulting differences impose, and to make us as nearly as we can be contemporaries of prophets, apostles, and of Christ Himself, so that we can be eye—and ear—witnesses. Regarding the authorship, date, occasion, purpose and character of any writing modern scholarship does not ask what tradition says, for regarding many of these writings there is no trustworthy tradition, and the source of many a tradition is but a guess, more often unhappy than happy. It goes to the writings themselves to dis-

cover what account they give of themselves. It supplements this internal evidence, as it is called, by any external evidence there may be in contemporary or nearly contemporary literary and historical sources, when these are not merely unverified tradition. About conclusions there is room for difference of judgment; but that the method is the only legitimate one there can be no doubt. It is the application to the Bible of those methods of observation, comparison, inference, hypothesis, verification which have been so successful in the realm of physical science. Such modifications of the methods as the differences of the objects demand are made, but common is the one aim to get the facts, all the facts, and only the facts. It is not with anything the Bible itself contains that modern scholarship comes in conflict, but with views about the Bible which rest only on unverified traditions, or untested assumptions.

(3) When we come, after dealing with the matters with which this method can deal, to questions of historical trustworthiness, moral and religious authority, we come into a region where psychological insight, moral and spiritual discernment may legitimately be exercised on the facts reached by the previous enquiries. The conclusions here are not so certain, as they depend on judgments of value, regarding persons, practices, doctrines. The modern scholar, who is a Christian believer, may find himself in agreement on many questions with other scholars, who do not share his faith, and yet on these most important questions he may reject

their conclusions, just because his faith introduces a new factor—a necessary and legitimate factor in dealing with a religious literature—into his own judgment. It is not just to try and discredit the method of modern scholarship by fixing attention on the conclusions of scholars, who are indifferent to the Christian religion. It is in scholars who are also Christian believers that the method should be tested, for there it is at its best, because dealing with the Bible from the standpoint of faith, from which alone its true significance can be apprehended, and its full value be appreciated. It is as a convinced and confident believer in the Gospel of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, but also as one who has found only mental, moral and religious gain from modern scholarship that I make this attempt to remove the difficulties which many Christians are feeling to-day in regard to the Old Testament, having Sunday School teachers especially in view.

(4) Among Sunday School teachers three classes may be distinguished. (i) There are those who have adopted the modern standpoint as regards the Old Testament, and teach from that standpoint. They may perhaps learn something from this book as to the way in which all needless offence to the consciences of teachers and parents, less advanced in their views, may be avoided, so that despite differences of opinion a common religious and moral interest may be preserved in the teaching and training of the children for Christ. (ii) There is a growing number of teachers who find it almost impossible to teach some of the Old Testament lessons, because



they have left the old standpoint so far behind that they cannot treat the lessons from it, and yet they are not so much at home in the new standpoint, if they have reached it at all, as to get the full advantage in their teaching which in most such cases it offers. It is to remove this difficulty that this book is written. (iii) There are a great many teachers who know nothing of modern scholarship, and are quite content with, nay, even zealous for, the old standpoint. If they alone were concerned, there would be no reason for troubling or distressing them; but the interests of the children must be considered. When the boys and girls grow up they will confront the new situation and be unable to meet it; they may even be so assailed by doubt as to lose the faith which has not been well-grounded. Sceptics have used to the full the advantage that an ignorant and unintelligent view of the Bible gives to their arguments. Further, as has already been suggested, Christian theology has suffered, because the Old Testament has been placed on a level with the New Testament, both as regards the idea of God and the ideal for man. That the children may be saved from unworthy views of God and goodness, the Old Testament must be taught with such discrimination as modern scholarship affords. Hence this book appeals even to those who do not feel this need.

## CHAPTER I.

### Religion, Revelation, and Inspiration.

THE Bible is the literature of a human *religion*; it is the record of a divine *revelation*; it is a library of *inspired* writings. We can best approach our subject by a consideration of these three conceptions.

(1) Religion is universal in mankind, and necessary to manhood. No tribe so savage or barbarous but it has some beliefs, rites, and customs which can be called religious. Man everywhere feels his need of, and uses some means of reaching and winning the favour of the divine, however crudely conceived or corruptly worshipped. Not intellectual curiosity, not spiritual aspiration, but only practical necessity is the motive of religion at the start. Man seeks his own good by aid of the spirits or gods in the lower stages of the development of religion.

(2) Semitic heathenism is the background of the religion of the Hebrew nation, as presented to us in the Old Testament; rites, customs and beliefs of that heathenism survive, or are revived in the popular religion, and are rebuked by the prophets. A constant conflict between the lower faith of the people and the higher faith of the prophets can be traced in the Hebrew literature. Three instances may suffice:

(i) Hosea recognises that heathen ideas and practices are associated with the title *Baal* (Lord) for God, as that title was common in Semitic heathenism, and accordingly he declares that in the day of religious revival and moral reformation for which he hopes, that title will be discarded, and a title that for him expressed God's forgiving love and saving grace, *Ishi* (my husband) would be used (Hosea ii. 16).

(ii) Micah, rebuking the superstition that God's wrath could be appeased by the number and value of the sacrifices offered, even by human sacrifice as most precious, declares God's social, moral, and religious demand, "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah vi. 8).

(iii) A still more striking instance of how a lower conception was replaced by a higher in the same mind is presented to us in the story of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. The current conception of his own age that he ought to offer his most precious possession—even the son of promise—is corrected in his conviction that this is not the sacrifice God requires (Genesis xxii.). If we are not to err in studying the Old Testament, we must always carefully distinguish the lower popular from the higher prophetic conception.

(3) The lower, till it is corrected by the higher, is regarded as the mind and will of God, and is often so described even in the record which deals with the religion as it is at each stage; but we must

ever be discriminating between what as imperfect is superseded, and that which as true and good is allowed to survive. It is a fascinating study to follow the development of this human religion, from its beginnings in Semitic heathenism to its consummation in the "ethical monotheism" of the prophets, the belief in and worship of God, One and Holy. We are dealing with living men in their striving for the good, their search after God. And there is no other literature in which that quest and conquest by man of goodness and of God is presented to us so fully and clearly, with such worth and charm, so convincingly and attractively.

(4) Religion is an activity of human personality, not isolated from, but related to, and dependent on other activities, and all the conditions, physical and social, by which these activities are determined. Further, only at a very advanced stage of development does the individual detach himself in his religion from the society to which he belongs. In certain forms of mysticism religion may be conceived as the communion of the alone with the Alone, the solitary soul with the Sole God; but generally religion is the function of a community, tribal or national. The religion of the Hebrews was, till the time of Moses, tribal; after that time it became national. With the fall of the Southern Kingdom in the time of Jeremiah, a relation of the individual believer begins to be recognised. The new covenant is individual (Jeremiah xxxi. 33, 34). To us many of the Psalms sound like utterances of individual piety; but many scholars maintain that,

though the first personal pronoun singular is used, it is the consciousness of the religious community restored after the Exile which finds expression in them. In the higher phases of religion a great religious personality founds a community, detached from national or racial conditions, individual in its appeal, and universal in its intention. It is in Christ that the Hebrew religion at last reaches this phase, and passes over into Christianity as an inheritance by which the new religion is enriched from the treasures of the old. We cannot understand the Hebrew religion unless we study the religious personality by the methods of psychology, and the religious community by the method of sociology. We must follow the development of thought and life in the individual, and the society in accordance with the laws of development, as these sciences disclose them to us. Religion as a human phenomenon, individual and social, is subject to the conditions and limitations of human nature, even the religion, however highly we rate its worth, of which the Old Testament is the literature.

## II.

(1) Religion is a relation of man to God; it is, however, not merely a human phenomenon, since to be real the relation must be mutual; and so it involves a relation of God to man which we may call *revelation*. Wherever there is sincere religion, there is real revelation. Wherever man seeks God, God is found, nay, rather God first seeks man, and that is why man seeks God at all. In nature and his-

tory, in human society, in the individual reason and conscience, God makes Himself known as man is able to receive that knowledge. This is the teaching of the New Testament (Acts xiv. 17; xvii. 27-28; Romans i. 19-21; ii. 14-16). God's communication depends on man's capacity and desire to receive from God; and these are conditioned by the stage of personal and historical development reached. The inadequate conceptions of God men have held, and do hold, do not disprove the reality of God's presence and activity in revealing Himself. Even if it is due to human error and sin that so many of these conceptions are so gross and perverse, yet even for a sinless race a gradual progress from less to more adequate conceptions of God would have been a necessity, as God Himself has so made man that growth is a condition of life, mental, moral and spiritual as well as physical. A discerning and sympathetic study of the religions of the world leads to the conclusion not that sin has not been a disturbing factor in the evolution, but that much which from our more advanced stage of development we despise, or condemn as false and unworthy, is to be regarded as an honest and earnest endeavour to apprehend divine reality, inadequate and imperfect because of the limitation of the developed capacity. We now cannot condemn all other religions as altogether false, and affirm that only one is at all true, because the facts force on us the conviction that God is in all, and through all, and over all, revealing Himself to men as they are able and willing to receive that revelation. Often unwilling, they often



also have been unable to receive any but an inadequate communication from God.

(2) This admission of a universal revelation of God does not exclude the recognition of a special revelation to the Hebrew nation. When we compare the Bible, even the Old Testament alone, with the Sacred Scriptures of other religions, the difference is at once seen. In none of these do we find the writings of a succession of inspired prophets interpreting a continuous course of divine providence, through which we may trace a progressive divine revelation. As regards mental, moral, and religious quality alone there is no comparison. There is progress in the conception of God, in the standards of morality for man, in the unfolding of a divine purpose in human history, in the expectation of the future life, and in the hope of the Kingdom of God. Nowhere else is there such contrition for sin, and such assurance of forgiveness. To view the Old Testament as if it were all of one piece, of the same time and place, and to ignore the progressiveness of the revelation which it contains is to miss its meaning and to lose its worth in comparison with all other sacred scriptures. It is just because within the Old Testament itself there are the corrections at a later stage of that revelation of the defects of the earlier that we can make the claim for it that we do.

What accounts for this great difference? Is it due entirely to difference of human receptivity, or is there also a difference of divine activity, or must we admit difference in both respects?

(i) It has been argued that the Semites had a

genius for monotheism, and that the Hebrews especially had a special endowment in religion. It is true that we find among the Semitic kinsmen of the Hebrews a movement towards monolatry, that is, the worship of a tribal or national god, but not to the exclusion of the belief in other gods, and even worship of them. Among the Hebrews we find a stricter monolatry, for while belief in other gods is not excluded, worship of them is. Nowhere else, however, did this monolatry develop into monotheism, the belief that there is, and can be only one God. Was this unique development due to a religious quality of the whole nation? The Old Testament gives us the impression that the natural tendency of the people was towards polytheism and idolatry. The contrast between the popular and the prophetic religion has already been noted. What progress was made was secured by the prophets, not with the support of, but in opposition to many of their countrymen. It was only after the Exile that the "ethical monotheism" of the prophets gained an assured place in the thought and life of the nation. To the prophets is due the progress of the divine revelation. Other nations have had great personalities of exceptional religious receptivity, but what marks out the Hebrew nation is that there was such a succession from the eighth to the fifth century before the Christian era. Can such a succession be accounted for by the assumption that human receptivity was greater here than elsewhere, or must we not recognise divine activity?

(ii) That the divine activity is conditioned by

human receptivity must be insisted on. God does not treat prophets as puppets, but as persons. His supernatural power does not overbear the natural endowments of men. It is only through rational, moral, and religious men that God reveals Himself to men. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." (Psalm xxv. 14). It is according to faith that God makes Himself known in truth and grace. Any view of revelation which does not recognise its relation to and dependence on religion is false to God and man. God gives His message in making, by His Spirit, the men through whom it is given. God's Spirit does stimulate the development of all the capacities of man, and we must not be rash in setting limits to the capacities of man so stimulated. Nevertheless, God's communication is measured by the capacity of man to receive and transmit it to others. God's revelation comes to men by men, and within the necessary limitations of human nature.

(iii) That there was a distinctive divine activity in the Hebrew prophets we are justified in maintaining. It is an unwarranted assumption that God's activity in revealing Himself must be uniform, that there can be no personal discrimination. If Christianity teaches anything it teaches that God's relation to each soul is an individual relation. He knows each, and treats each as distinct in nature, needs, and possibilities. The sense of personal vocation would be an illusion if there were not this individual personal relation of God to men. As of individuals, so of nations. A

nation may be chosen for a work for God to which no other is called. As God fulfilled His purpose in the realm of human culture in Greece, and in the region of government in Rome, so He appointed the Hebrew nation to be in its religion the bearer of a more distinctly personal revelation than can come through culture or government. An intimacy of communion with God belongs to religion as to no other human pursuit. The prophets knew themselves to be God's confidants, to whom His secret counsels were disclosed. "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets" (Amos iii. 7). Each prophet knew himself called of God; and as there was in this nation as in no other a succession of men so called, we may regard the nation itself as called to be the agent of the purpose of God.

(iv) This conclusion is confirmed if we remember that the teaching of the prophets was always closely related to current events; their moral and religious principles had always a present application. They threatened judgment, or offered mercy to the nation there and then. For them human history was divine providence. Assyria was the rod of God's anger (Isaiah x. 5). The great empires of the ancient world—Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome—were all in turn brought into contact with this small people, and proved instruments of its discipline and development; their activities in relation to it were the historical conditions of this progressive revelation. It may be said that there is no less divine providence in human history

in other times and places; only the prophetic interpreters are lacking. But is this an adequate explanation? Has any nation had a history in which providence was so manifest? As I believe the revelation to be unique, so must I regard the inspiration of its prophets and the providence in its history also as unique. In this nation is focussed, and so made more evident, a divine activity which as more diffused in other lands and times cannot be so fully or clearly discerned.

(v) In considering the divine providence in the history of the Hebrew nation we are at once confronted with the problem of miracles, on which some observations must be offered. (a) In regard to the person and works of Christ, we admit not only the possibility, but even the actuality of miracles, of what we must in the present state of our knowledge at least regard as a supernatural activity of God, which we cannot explain by the forces or according to the laws of nature as known to us. As Christians, we approach the Old Testament records without any prejudice against miracles. Should any supernatural activity of God in nature or history appear to us so necessary to, and congruous with God's purpose of revelation, as the miracles of Christ fit into His revelation of the Father, we would be ready to accept the record as trustworthy.

(b) Even with this presumption it is our duty to examine very candidly and thoroughly the character of the alleged miracle on the one hand and the sufficiency of the evidence for it on the other hand. For the miracles of Jesus we have contemporary

evidence, the testimony of witnesses whose intimate relation to Jesus should justify our confidence. No such claim can be made for the records of the Old Testament. As has been shown, the writings in the Pentateuch were centuries later than the events, with only the precarious channel of tradition or song between. As the story in Joshua (x. 12-14) shows, a poetic description of a natural occurrence may often have been turned in course of time into a prose account of a miracle. Many of the alleged miracles are open to such an explanation. The stories about Elijah and Elisha belong to popular tradition, and are not of the same historical trustworthiness as the other records in which they are set. Where no moral value or spiritual significance can be discerned in any such event, there is an added reason for at least suspense of judgment. It is possible that there were "signs, wonders, or powers" to confirm the authority of Moses as God's messenger and the people's leader, to rebuke unbelief, and encourage faith; but regarding this we cannot make any confident assertion. Christian faith does not doubt God's power to work such miracles; but even when the evidence is good, it is for moral and spiritual discernment to judge whether such action is in accordance with His character and purpose.

### III.

(I) It is in this wider context of human religion and divine revelation in the history of a nation that we must consider the subject of inspiration. There are arbitrary and artificial theories of inspira-



tion which ignore this context. Instead of starting from the facts of the prophetic consciousness for the Old Testament, and the teaching of the New Testament regarding the Holy Spirit, these theories start from a pagan conception of inspiration as the supersession of human personal activities by divine action, and come by abstract reasoning to conclusions about the inspiration of the Bible which are not at all in accord with either what the Bible is, or claims to be. It is not with the inspiration of a single book, which the Bible historically is not, or even a succession of writings, with which we are first of all concerned, but with inspired persons, as indeed persons alone can be inspired. Their writings are inspired only as they express their personal inspiration. The prophets did claim that they were in such intimate communion with God that they received communications from God which it was their duty at any peril or cost to convey to men. While they used the formula to indicate the source of their message, *Thus saith the Lord*, they must not be understood as claiming that the language was not their own, but God's. Some of the prophets (Isaiah vi.) had abnormal psychical experiences of seeing visions and hearing voices, by which they were confirmed in the certainty that their message was from God; but usually they freely and fully exercised their own reason, conscience, spirit in their communion with God; and their message bears all the distinctive characteristics of their personality. The disposition, talents, character and experience of each prophet left a mark on his teaching. How abun-

dant is the variety, how wide are the differences in the succession of the prophets, and therefore how manifold are the truth and grace of God, the judgment and the mercy, as conveyed by them to men! The human interest does not detract from but enhances the divine value of their messages.

(2) In other religions, and even in the early phases of prophecy in the Hebrew nation inspiration—the sense of being God-possessed and God-directed—took the form of great emotional disturbance, expressed in music, song, and dance, and accompanied sometimes by abnormal mental conditions. In the prophets, whose writings have come down to us there were sometimes such abnormal conditions; and doubtless the impassioned speech of some of them indicates an exaltation of spirit; but they were in full command of their powers. Their humanity was at its highest and best, when they were most conscious of God. Reason and conscience were stimulated to a moral and spiritual discernment which otherwise they would not have attained. Certainty in receiving, confidence in delivering, and courage in facing opposition to their message were also tokens of that same dwelling and working in them of the Spirit of God. We must even recognise degrees of inspiration in them as they more or less responded to the Spirit's presence and power. A later prophet, less inspired in his own experience, might yet convey a fuller revelation of God's truth and grace than an earlier of richer experience, because he had as the starting-point of his ministry what had been the goal of the other. We cannot say

that fuller revelation and deeper inspiration correspond, as the progressiveness of the revelation must be recognised. Prediction was a subordinate function of the prophet, but it was a function. He enforced his moral and religious appeal by warnings of judgment or promises of mercy in relation to the historical circumstances of his own day; and when he looked beyond the immediate future to the final fulfilment of God's purpose, he always envisaged it as in close relation to his own age, and under the conditions and with the limitations of his own world. His revelation was not the unravelling of the riddle of future centuries, but the presentation of an idea of God, an ideal for men, an assurance of God's purpose to save and bless His people.

(3) To us the prophets are pre-eminently the agents of the revelation of God; but to the Jew their authority was subordinate to that of the Law. In the successive codes which modern scholarship can trace in the books of the Law, there is a progress in morals and religion, which can be traced to prophetic influences. Moses, the founder of the religion of the nation, although in the tribes out of which it was formed there was the tradition of Jehovah's relation to the fathers, was himself a prophet, first in the succession, with probably no successor of greater influence than he possessed. (Deut. xxxiv. 10-12). Most of the ritual and ceremonial requirements of that law have lost all significance for us to-day, but the moral and religious principles which are the factors of the progress we can trace belong to our inheritance also. The historical books

which give us not only the setting in history of that progressive revelation, but are also written from the prophetic standpoint of a divine providence in human affairs do not show the same kind or degree of inspiration as the prophets. The writers use the materials available for them by the methods current in their own time, and their value for us is what they record of God's dealings with men. In the Psalms we have the response of human piety to the revelation of God possessed—contrition for sin, aspiration for holiness, gratitude to God, petition for His comfort, succour or help. In this dependence on, communion with, and submission to God, the believer and saint is moved by the Spirit of God; and his moral and spiritual insight sometimes puts him in the prophetic succession as an agent of fresh revelation, as for instance, the view of contrition as the only acceptable sacrifice in the fifty-first psalm. The psalms are not primarily communications of God to man, as is prophecy, but man's communion with God. In the Wisdom literature we have human reflection on the world and life, enlightened by God's revelation. Inspiration thus varies with the closeness of the fellowship with God, and the function assigned in the purpose of God.

## CHAPTER II.

### The Old Testament as Literature.

(1)

THE Old Testament is not one *book*, although there is a unity and continuity of purpose discoverable in it; but it is a *library* of writings of many minds in many times. Nor are these writings all of one *kind*; it has the variety which human literature possesses, as imagination, intellect, emotion, and desire express themselves in very varied ways. To treat it as it is often treated, as a religious creed or a moral code, as a textbook of theology or ethics in plain prose, and to interpret it accordingly with indiscriminating literalness is to miss all its charm, and lose most of its power. To denounce as enemies of the truth—as the literalists do, those who interpret poetry as poetry, and not as prose, prophecy as prophecy and not as history—is to display not piety, but ignorance and prejudice. We must not limit God to one kind of literature as the human channel of His communications with men; but must gratefully recognise that as it is God who has enriched the mind of man with this variety in its self-expression, so He has been pleased to use this abundance of His gifts to men to make wider in its appeal, and thus greater in its influence, the literature in which His revelation is enshrined. We may say that there is

no theology in the Old Testament but religion, and no ethics but morality. There is no science; but only such knowledge as is needed to guard life from error and wrong, and to guide the soul into truth and duty. Because the knowledge which the Bible imparts is practical wisdom, and not speculative thought, it is presented in all such ways as attract attention, and command interest. For this end poetry may be much more effective than prose, symbol than definition, parable than argument. What alone matters is that by any means men shall be made wise unto salvation, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (II. Timothy iii. 15-17).

(2) The Bible is literature also in the more strictly definite sense in which the word is sometimes used; that not only is the content true and right, but that the expression itself is good. Not all that is written is literature, but only what is *well* written; as not all that is spoken is eloquence, but only what is *well* spoken. Beauty must be allied with truth, if content and expression are to be fitly and worthily wedded together. While there may be exceptions, due to special individual defects in the writer, yet as a rule what is worth saying gets itself well said, as there is usually concord, and not discord, between thought and speech. Just as we distinguish rhetoric as artificial from eloquence as spontaneous, so we may distinguish "fine writing" from good literature. Where the attention to the form is disproportionate to the interest in the matter, where a man is more concerned about *how* he speaks or writes than about *what* he imparts from his own to other



minds, we have neither eloquence nor literature in the true sense of the words. The more freely the life, as it were, makes its own body, the better the speech or the writing. That does not mean careless disregard of the quality of the self-expression, for freedom comes through discipline. The writers of the Bible are not indifferent to the art of writing. They sometimes use literary art to make attractive their message. Not all the Old Testament is literature of the finest kind; for often the expression, as in Chronicles, for instance, is prosaic enough; but much of it is literature of the highest order, in which beauty is wedded to truth, in which literary art serves morality and religion, in which the earthen vessel is excellent, even as is the heavenly treasure which it contains. The apprehension of the truth by the teacher will not lose, but gain, from the appreciation of the beauty; and the teacher will widen his influence with the scholar if his teaching can convey both the apprehension and the appreciation.

(3) The earliest form of literature is probably the *ballad-dance*, in which the three arts of rhythmic speech, sound, and movement were combined. When "Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances" (Exodus xv. 20), we find ourselves at the very source of literature. Great events were so commemorated; and the song then sung was passed from generation to generation. This, too, is the earliest form of history; and collections of songs are among the sources used in the historical books of

the Old Testament for the record of the early days, *e.g.*, *The Book of Jasher* quoted in Jos. x. 13. Stories of the olden times were handed down from one age to another, and these traditions the later historians also used. Of what lay in a more distant past, which even tradition did not reach, some explanation was sought, and the imagination offered what the intellect craved. The Hebrews brought from their home in Mesopotamia, and shared with some of their Semitic kinsmen the ideas held about the beginnings of the world and man, sin and death; but when these ideas were taken up into the literature they were morally and religiously transformed in accordance with the moral ideals and religious ideas of the later age. The stories of the Creation and the Fall in Genesis ii. and iii. have their counterparts in Babylonian stories; but have been purified and elevated by God's revealing Spirit. Their moral and religious truth is independent of their original character. Moral customs and religious rites also passed down the centuries, and in the Old Testament we can find traces of Semitic heathenism; but this inheritance is always undergoing a transformation by the progressive revelation of God in the developing religion. The priests preserved the tradition of the moral, religious requirements of the national God, Jehovah; but their conservatism could not prevent all change, and in code and ritual alike there was development with changing conditions and the growing moral conscience and religious consciousness. These are the earliest materials, out of which the literature was fashioned.

(4) This volume is not concerned with the details of Old Testament Introduction, but it falls within the present purpose to indicate the mode of composition of the Old Testament writings, as a guide to the study of them. (a) The Jews gave the first place in the canon to the Law, the five books of Moses, as tradition described it, the Pentateuch as scholars now usually call it. It is now generally agreed that there is no internal evidence for the Mosaic authorship of these writings, and that the internal evidence is against it. As regards external evidence, we have only a late Jewish tradition which passed into the Christian Church, and which can have no authority for us. We can even now trace the older documents out of which the Pentateuch is composed, as the ancient writers did not re-write the literary sources they used in their own words, referring to them in quotations and foot-notes, as do our writers now; but they put large parts of these sources into their records, with little, if any, change, and with only additions of connection or comment. We can thus recover these sources sometimes almost in their entirety.

(b) After the division of the Southern and the Northern Kingdom, these songs, and traditions passed down two separate channels. In the Northern Kingdom a narrative of the former times was written, which is now usually distinguished by the letter E, as the term *Elohim* is used for God. In the Southern Kingdom a similar work came to be, and it is named J, as the covenant name Jehovah, or more correctly, Yahveh (translated in A.V., LORD),

is used. It is uncertain which of the two documents is earlier, but it is generally agreed that both are not later than 750 B.C., as, although the tone and standpoint of both can be described as prophetic, yet they both mark an earlier stage of development than any of the writing prophets. Both belong to the golden age of Hebrew literature, and may perhaps go back to a period soon after the division of the monarchy. They were combined into one work, which may be described as the *prophetical* narrative, possibly even in the eighth century. It is quite uncertain when *Deuteronomy* (D) was composed, but it is certain that it was the book discovered in the Temple in the time of Josiah, in 621. It shows very distinctly the influence of the earlier writing prophets. The *Priestly Code* (P) shows the legal and the sacerdotal interest as dominant, and also some Babylonian influences; it was probably composed in Babylon after the Exile, about 500 B.C.

(c) As has been indicated already, some of the contents of these documents go back to very early times. The dates given are the dates of composition of the documents as we now have them. These documents were brought together with editorial additions soon after the completion of P., possibly by Ezra, or under his supervision. It was the completed Pentateuch, "the book of the law of Moses," which was read by him to the people (Neh. viii. 1, 5, 8), and received by them as henceforth authoritative for them. It was called the law of Moses, not because it was known that he wrote the whole book, but because to him, as the founder of the

national religion, was traced back the beginning of that development of morals and ritual, which we can follow throughout the history, and to which the prophets refer, when they speak of the law (Isa. i. 10; ii. 3; Hosea iv. 6; viii. 1; Amos ii. 4; Micah iv. 2). This was not contained in written books in the possession of the people, but given in oral instruction by priests and prophets. This teaching was from time to time written down, and is now included in the documents, of which the Pentateuch is composed.

(d) As much prejudice has been excited against modern biblical scholarship, because it gives this account of the composition of the Pentateuch, a few remarks to remove it may be added.

(i) It is a groundless assumption that only the traditional view of the authorship of the Pentateuch preserves for us its moral and religious value. What difference to the truth contained in these writings does it make, whether they were written by one man in his own lifetime, or are the result of the age-long process (from 1200 to 450 B.C.) which has been described?

(ii) As all who know anything of modern science are prepared to admit an evolution of the physical universe, as all who study history can trace in it a development, of civilisation, culture, morals and religion, so it is much more intelligible and credible that God should have imparted His purpose to men not in one lifetime, but in just such a process of continuous activity in manifold ways through many men.

(iii) That Moses should have anticipated the conditions of future ages and made provision for their needs, even under the illumination of the Spirit of God, is much less intelligible and credible than that the Spirit of God guided priests and prophets in many generations to give just such instruction regarding the will of God as was needed by, and adapted to each age.

(5) The second main division of the Jewish canon was entitled *the Prophets*. It is probable that it was not closed till the beginning of the third century B.C., when it was assumed that the succession of prophets had ended with Malachi. The collection of the earlier prophets consisted of the historical books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings, and the collection of the later prophets included Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve minor prophets. It is to be observed that Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah are not included in the historical books, and that Daniel does not appear among the prophets. This fact has an important bearing, as will afterwards be shown, on their date. (a) The reason why the historical books are described as the earlier prophets is this. On the one hand the record is written from the prophetic standpoint, with a dominantly religious interest as an interpretation of the divine providence, God's dealing in judgment or mercy with His people; and on the other not the kings, but the prophets are exalted, for the greater part of the record deals with the opposition in the name of the Lord of the prophets to the policy of the kings. Even in these writings the prophets

are the bearers of the divine revelation. Not the events narrated nor the persons described are in any way inspired, but only the messengers of God to men.

(*b*) In the book of Joshua we can trace the same documents as in the Pentateuch, and the method of composition is similar. Some scholars have concluded that it was once joined to the Pentateuch, and speak of a Hexateuch, or six-fold book. The composition of the book of Judges is of the same kind, but the documents incorporated are similar to rather than the same as in the Pentateuch. We have here tales told about national heroes, and are beginning to approach the firmer ground of what we should call history. The Song of Deborah (chap. v.) is one of the earliest works of Hebrew literature preserved in the Old Testament. While the scene of the book of Ruth is in Bethlehem, in the time of the Judges, and the story was probably handed down by tradition, yet literary form was not given to it till after the Exile, and it has been conjectured that it may have been written as a protest against Ezra's policy in respect of alien wives (Ezra x.). The two books of Samuel (so called, not because he was their author, but because of the part he played in establishing the Kingship) were once a single work, as were also the two books of Kings. Sources, similar to those in the Pentateuch, were also used in the same way. The three great names, Samuel, Saul, and David command the interest.

Two features of great importance for the subsequent history emerge: (i) the family of David is



established on the throne by divine oracle, and this promise (II. Samuel vii. 8-16) is the starting-point of Messianic prophecy. (ii) Moses was himself a prophet; but the schools of the prophets were fostered by Samuel, and Samuel himself, Gad and Nathan play an important part in the history recorded in I. and II. Samuel, as Elijah and Elisha do in that found in I. and II. Kings.

When we come to I. and II. Kings we find distinct references to named historical sources, the *Book of the Acts of Solomon*, a *Temple Record*, the *Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel or Judah*, as the case may be. The record of the work of Elijah and Elisha is drawn from another source than the annals of the Kings; and here there seems to be a much more considerable infusion of popular tradition. From the biography of *Isaiah* come those chapters which deal with his ministry. The editorial activity in fusing these sources together is very marked. Throughout, the spirit of the history is religious, and God's purpose in regard to the house of David is the central interest. As the king on the throne of David disappointed expectations, the prophets looked to the future for the fulfilment of God's promise, and thus Messianic prophecy was developed.

(c) Regarding these historical books some remarks may be offered for the teacher's guidance. Owing to the composition of these writings out of different documents, there are duplicates, variant accounts of the same event, such as David's first introduction to Saul. (Compare I. Samuel xvi.

14-23 with xvii. 31-58). While much of the narrative can be accepted as historical, all the evidence is not of equal value. The dominant religious purpose of the writers did not raise them above the limitations of their age and country as regards knowledge and judgment. Interesting as the events and persons are, it is in God's dealings with, and messages to men that the revelation of God in these writings is contained.

The historical framework of persons and events is not the divine revelation; but the prophetic interpretation of the course of history as divine providence does belong to the revelation. The character, conduct, religion and morals of the men and women whose lives are recorded, are not to be regarded as exemplary or authoritative for us, to whom grace and goodness have come in Jesus Christ. We are to approve in them only what is in accordance with the standard which He has set; we are to recognise as defective what falls short of that standard, whether it be due to individual fault, or social usage. Jael is no model of womanhood, even although in the *Song* she is described as blessed above women (Judges iv., v. 24), or Samson of manhood, although we may recognise that it was a genuine and intense patriotism which was expressed in the imperfect morality of the time and the people.

The teacher must show how much better or worse the persons dealt with were than the recognised standards; but also how far these standards at their best often fall short of, or how near they may sometimes get to the truth as it is in Jesus. As the

writers of the records themselves showed the moral and religious limitations of their age and people, their praise or blame also must be tested by the Christian conscience. God's gradual teaching and training of men in faith and duty—that is the guiding principle in dealing with these narratives.

(6) It is in regard to our understanding and valuing of the prophets that modern scholarship has rendered its greatest service. It has related them to the history of which they are the interpreters; it has placed them in the order in which they appear as the agents of the progressive revelation; it has fixed both them and the history in the wider context of the records of the great empires with which the Hebrew nation came in contact, as disclosed by archæology. The monuments of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon are yielding up their secrets, and are enabling us to gain the meaning and gauge the worth of the prophets as we could not before.

While it is true that the prophetic writings cannot be used in Sunday School teaching to the extent to which the historical books can be, yet the teacher, for the enrichment of his own thought and life, should have some knowledge of them: and in the Senior Department especially should their careers and teaching be made a subject of study. We know enough of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, and Hosea to present their life-story in a way that should interest and instruct the older scholars.

(a) While there are still many critical questions unanswered, and there is difference of opinion among scholars, yet some conclusions are generally

accepted as certain. Hosea and Amos belong to the eighth century before Christ, and their ministry is concerned with God's judgment on the Northern Kingdom in the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C.

A little later Isaiah, a citizen of Jerusalem, and Micah, a countryman, are heralds of mercy as well as judgment to the Southern Kingdom. It is now generally agreed that the book of Isaiah as we have it, is a very composite work, that even in the first thirty-nine chapters there are prophecies which cannot be regarded as his, and that from the fortieth chapter onwards we have a collection of prophecies of the years before and after the return from the Babylonian Exile in 538 B.C.

Zephaniah, the occasion of whose prophecy was probably a Scythian invasion and Nahum who was concerned with God's judgment on Nineveh, belong to the early part of the seventh century.

The fall of Jerusalem, the overthrow of the Southern Kingdom, the Exile in Babylon at the beginning of the sixth century (586 B.C.) were interpreted by Jeremiah, one of the most interesting and pathetic of the prophetic figures, who is held by some scholars to have been the historical model for the ideal description of the suffering servant of God in Isaiah lii. 13—liii. 12, and by Habakkuk, who wrestled with the problem of providence which the triumph of a brute power such as Babylon presented.

Ezekiel, most unlike Jeremiah in his dominant ecclesiastical interests, belongs to the earlier part of the Exile, and already foresees the return.

One of the greatest of the prophets is the unnamed prophet, for convenience often named by scholars the Deutero—or second Isaiah, who foretold the return from the Exile (538 B.C.).

Haggai and Zechariah (i.-viii.) belong to the returned Jewish community, and deal with the rebuilding of the city and the temple.

Malachi falls in the middle of the 5th century, and shows the need of the reforms for which Ezra and Nehemiah laboured.

Joel, Zechariah (ix.—xiv.) and Obadiah are of uncertain date; but the probability is on the whole that they belong to the period after the Exile.

Jonah is not so much a prophetic writing as a story told about a prophet of former days, possibly to rebuke the narrow exclusiveness of the Jewish community as it appears in Ezra and Nehemiah. It has not the assured historical background that the prophetic writings have; but allegorical, or parabolic as it is, the lesson of the book, that God's chosen people is called to be the missionary of God to the world, places it at the highest stage of the progressive divine revelation in the Old Testament.

Daniel is not included in the prophetic writings in the Jewish canon, but falls into the third division and belongs to another literary type than the prophets, the apocalyptic, of which more will be said at a later stage of the discussion.

(b) Moses, Samuel, Nathan, Gad, Elijah and Elisha were all prophets; but the writing prophets begin with Amos in the eighth century and close

with Malachi in the fifth century—a period of about three hundred years. During these years the chosen people passed through many changes; the Northern and then the Southern Kingdom fell; and the Hebrew nation became the Jewish church. Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Persia—the great empires of the ancient world—were all instruments of God's purpose in so altering its outward lot that its inward life was developed. The swelling tide of prophecy ebbed after the Exile; and the characteristic of the post-exilic period was not any further progress of the divine revelation, but rather a preservation within the hard husk of legalism of the tender kernel of that "ethical monotheism," the belief in God as One and Holy which was the product of the prophetic development.

If we consider on the one hand the divine providence in the history of those three centuries, and on the other the prophetic interpretation of that providence, and the result of the action and re-action of these two factors on the idea of God and the ideal of man which this "ethical monotheism" has bequeathed to the religious and moral thought and life of mankind, we must be convinced that we have an authentic and unique communication from God to man.

(c) The prophets taught the truth about God and the duty for man, but never as abstract theology or ethics, always in immediate relation to the circumstances of their own age and nation. As has been already indicated, their primary business was to read the signs of the times, to interpret

human history as divine providence, contemporary events as the judgment or mercy of God. They were concerned not with the remote, but the immediate future, the results for those whom they were addressing of penitence and faith, or unbelief and disobedience. Their predictions were warnings or promises uttered to enforce their teaching. Many of their predictions were literally fulfilled, as the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722 B.C., the deliverance of Jerusalem in 701 B.C., the fall of the Southern Kingdom in 586 B.C., the return from Exile in 538 B.C., to mention only the most noteworthy. But by its very nature, much of their prophecy was conditional. They threatened judgment which penitence might avert; they promised mercy which impenitence might refuse. The conception of the future as unalterably fixed by divine decree, is a false conception, as it ignores that man as free is a fellow-worker with God in the shaping of events. If the future is not thus fixed, then prophecy cannot be *history written beforehand*. Prediction even is moral and spiritual discernment of the consequences of human action, and the divine intentions therein, but man may change his course of action, and God does adapt His dealings to man's actions.

What the teacher who is dealing with the prophets should emphasise is the flexibility, and not the rigidity of the divine providence: God fulfils His purpose in many ways; just as the helmsman of the ship takes into account currents and winds, and keeps his course by adapting himself to them, so God does not ignore man's penitence and faith,



or unbelief and disobedience, but by warning or promise through His messengers seeks to overcome man's opposition and secure his co-operation, and always deals with man as he deserves. This truth of a divine purpose, which man may help or hinder, is central to the prophetic teaching.

(*d*) What has just been said needs qualification in one respect. The prophets had present to their minds the hope of the final and perfect fulfilment of God's purpose towards His people, the coming of the Messiah, the day of the Lord. The more disappointing present events were, the more they turned to that anticipation of the future. They did not project it into the distant future: they were not conscious how long a development was necessary for the fulfilment. The certainty of their faith in God as supreme gave confidence to their hope that His purpose would be soon fulfilled. Just beyond each crisis they greeted the last consummation. This may be called, not a delusion, or apprehension of unreality, but an illusion, or inadequate apprehension of reality. Just as they placed this final consummation in close connection with contemporary events, so they must needs describe it in terms of their own experience. One age cannot anticipate the conditions of a later age; and the further off that age is, the less exact and adequate must be the anticipation.

Messianic prophecy was conditioned in each prophet by the political situation of his own time. Isaiah, dealing with a weak and foolish king, hoped for a scion of the house of David, a Miracle of

wisdom, a God-like hero, a Father to His people, a Prince of Peace (ix. 6). That prediction, Christian faith holds, found its perfect fulfilment in Christ, but not literally. We may say that fulfilment transcends, and must transcend prophecy: and in measure as the prophecy is removed in time from the fulfilment. As the prophet's vision of the future became less related to his present, his language had to be more and more symbolical; not in prose, but in poetry did he express his hopes. Not all the prophets are equally poets, but poetry and not prose is the more appropriate vehicle for prophecy which does not deal with present fact which can be observed and described, but with future possibility, which can only be inadequately envisaged, and must therefore be presented in parable or symbol, in the language not of the intellect, but of the imagination. It is generally conceded that the human mind finds its highest expression in poetry, and not prose; and to describe the prophets as poets is not to depreciate them, but to pay them the highest tribute of admiration we can pay.

(e) Some illustrations may be given to show the value of the prophetic teaching.

(i) Amos, the earliest of the writing prophets, was a herdsman of Tekoa in the Southern Kingdom; he had not been trained in any of the schools of the prophets, but the Lord had spoken to him, and he could not but prophesy (iii. 8). His outlook is not limited to the kingdom of which he was a subject, but he was impelled by the Spirit of God to go to Bethel, there to prophesy against the house of Israel, and

there to encounter Amaziah the priest—a scene typical of the age-long conflict of prophet and priest, the man of vision and the man of tradition (vii. 10-17). His most startling doctrine for his hearers was that God's election is not for privilege, but for responsibility (iii. 2), and that the moral authority of God extends over all nations, for in his prophecy he summons to God's judgment bar not Judah and Israel alone, but also the nations surrounding them.

(ii) Hosea learned in suffering what he taught in song. It was his own sorrowing, yearning, and forgiving love for his unfaithful wife (i. iii.) that taught him how God loved, and therefore sorrowed over, yearned for, and forgave His sinful people. Accordingly he conveyed his message in the declaration that God would no longer be called by His people Lord, but Husband (ii. 16). In this teaching He anticipates the New Testament revelation of God's Fatherhood.

(iii) Micah, the countryman, who was hot with indignation against the sin of the capital city Jerusalem, preaches social righteousness as the religion which is well-pleasing unto God in opposition to the popular superstition that God's favour can be bought by numerous and costly offerings (vi. 8).

(iv) A marked contrast to Micah is his contemporary Isaiah, citizen of Jerusalem, having access to the court, but not a courtier, statesman and prophet, or rather prophet as statesman, wiser than all the politicians of his time, because of his vision of God, and his conviction that only in entire submission to God could there be any safety from their enemies for the nation. When in 701 Jerusalem was besieged

by the hosts of Assyria, amid the panic of king and people he confidently foretold deliverance (xxxiii). His distinctive doctrine is that of the remnant. Although he addressed himself to the nation as a whole, yet he recognised that only a portion would give heed to his message, but that portion held for him the promise of the future of the whole people (i. 9, x. 20-22, xi. 11, 16, etc.). Even at his call he recognised that "the holy seed is the stock thereof" (vi. 13). He, too, revived the hope of the Messiah (ix. 6, 7).

(v) Jeremiah is the martyr-prophet; he was persecuted as a traitor, a pro-Babylonian, because he advised submission to Babylon as the instrument of God's judgment. As he saw the nation perishing because of its sin, he recognised the failure of the covenant with the nation as made in Sinai in outward law, and the need of another kind of relation between God and man, a relation inward "in the heart," as well as individual, with each man, the new covenant of grace not of law (xxx. 31-34). That new covenant was given to men in the sacrifice of Christ unto the forgiveness of sin (I. Corinthians xi. 25, Matt. xxvi. 28).

(vi) One side of the teaching of Jeremiah was more fully developed by Ezekiel. Addressing the exiles, who prided themselves on their innocence, regarded their sufferings as the punishment not of their own sins, but of the sins of the fathers, and expressed their conviction in the proverb "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (xviii. 2), he taught even with

exaggerated emphasis individual liberty and responsibility. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (verse 4). But he did look forward also to a national restoration, and presented his hope in a symbolic form in his vision of the Valley of Dry Bones (xxxvii. 1-14).

(vii) The culminating point of Old Testament prophecy is found in the great unnamed prophet of the Exile. In him profoundest theology and sublimest poetry are blended. Nowhere is the ethical monotheism stated with so confident a challenge of polytheism and idolatry (Isaiah xl. 12-26). In his description of the suffering Servant of God (lii. 13—liii. 12) he has more fully anticipated than any other Old Testament teacher the Christian doctrine of the Cross of Christ.

(7) With these few illustrations of the progress of divine revelation in the teaching of the prophets we must now pass to consider much more briefly the third section of the Jewish canon, *The Writings*, or *Hagiographa*. Most of these writings are later than the date when the canon of the Prophets was fixed about the beginning of the third century before Christ; and this third collection of writings was not completed till just before the Christian era. The authority of Esther, the Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes was still in dispute in the time of Christ.

(a) While much of the prophetic writings is poetic in form, yet it is in this collection that we find the writings which may be described as distinctively poetry. The *Psalms* are a collection, made up out of a number of previous collections, of the hymns

sung in the Second Temple after the Exile. Although many of them may be of pre-exilic date, some certainly are as late as the Maccabean era. They are not the literature of divine revelation, but of human religion as responsive to that revelation, and determined in character by it. For the most part they express what may be called a dateless devotion, and Christian saints have in all ages found in them a fit expression of their penitence for sin, their aspiration for holiness, their communion with God, as well as for the manifold changeful needs of human life and the earthly lot. The book of *Job* in one of the greatest poems in human literature, dramatic in spirit, if not strictly in form, wrestles with one of the greatest problems of human thought, the problem of pain in its acutest instance, the suffering of the righteous. The *Song of Songs*, the place of which in the canon was much debated in the Jewish schools, cannot now be regarded as it once was, as an allegory of the relation of the soul to Christ, but is a collection of love lyrics dealing, with a freedom our modern taste does not allow, with the relation of man and woman, but valuable as an impassioned expression of pure and faithful love. Some interpreters have endeavoured to show that it is a drama in lyric form. Although the *Book of Lamentations* is joined to Jeremiah, and thus falls into the collection of the prophets, yet it is a very fine example of Hebrew poetry, a series of dirges, or elegies, the occasion being the fall of Jerusalem in 586.

(b) In the Book of *Job* there is not only the

discussion of a problem with which philosophy is concerned; but there is also frequent reference to Wisdom, and in the twenty-eighth chapter there is a poem in praise of Wisdom. Thus this book belongs not only to the poetry of the Old Testament, but also to the "Wisdom" literature. After the full tide of inspiration in the prophets had ebbed, men began to reflect on the world and life, and in the light of the revelation received, sought to find the meaning of the world, and the aim of life, not speculatively, but practically. In this reflection we have the nearest approach in the Old Testament to philosophy. The *Book of Proverbs* deals with the duties and dangers of man's life; for its precepts wisdom is the guiding principle. It is a wisdom which is rooted in the fear of God, but many of its counsels show no higher motive than an earthly prudence. Folly bears its penalty, and Wisdom gains its reward. The morality taught falls short not only of the teaching of Jesus, but even of the teaching of the prophets. The admission of the book of *Ecclesiastes* was challenged in the Jewish schools. There are a few passages of pious reflection which some scholars regard as editorial insertions to secure its admission to the collection of Writings; but the book as a whole is unmitigated pessimism. It shows how little good a man who believed in God might find in life. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." This is its constant refrain. It probably was written during the Greek era, when the fortunes of the Jewish community were at the lowest, and when the mood of despondency had settled on



thoughtful men. It serves as a foil to the joyfulness and hopefulness of those who allowed their thought and life to be dominated by faith in God. It need hardly be said that the writer's outlook is not that of an inspired seer or saint, and his attitude is altogether different from that of the agents of the divine revelation. It is probable that in this writing are the first traces of the influence on Jewish belief of Greek thought, which afterwards became so potent a factor in the development of Christian theology. In these latest writings the river of Hebrew literature is beginning to flow out of its solitary channel, and to receive streams of influence from the culture of a wider world.

(c) There is a distinctive feature of Hebrew poetry, found not only in the strictly poetic books, but also in the prophets and the Wisdom literature, which must be mentioned. It is what is usually called *parallelism*; the lines, in which there is a rhythm, but not a metre, are found in pairs or groups, in which there is a correspondence or contrast of meaning. The same thought may be repeated in varying words, or thoughts may be opposed to one another. A thought may not only be repeated, but also expounded. One line also may supplement another. A few examples will make this clear. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters" (Ps. xxiii. 2. A synonymous parallelism). "A wise son maketh a glad father; but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother" (Prov. x. 1. An antithetic parallelism). "Answer not a fool accord-

ing to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him " (Prov. xxvi. 4. A synthetic parallelism). Other characteristics need not be mentioned, but this peculiarity duly recognised, the teacher will be saved from the mistake of supposing that a new truth is to be sought in every line. Hebrew poetry abounds in figures of speech, proverbs, parables, symbols; and will not yield up its truth or beauty to him who tries to interpret it with prosaic literalness. To be fully appreciated, its characteristics must be carefully studied. Then, as a thing of beauty it will become a joy for ever, as well as the channel of a message of God to man.

(d) Only a few words need be said about the late historical writings. I. and II. *Chronicles*, *Ezra*, and *Nehemiah* contain history dominated by the ecclesiastical interests of the post-exilic Judaism. *Chronicles* reviews the pre-exilic history and judges men and measures from the standpoint of Jewish orthodoxy, and is dependent on the older historical books. In *Ezra* and *Nehemiah* we have in part a contemporary record of a reformation carried through in the spirit of Jewish exclusiveness. In *Esther*, the place of which in the canon was challenged, there is a national fanaticism which seeks no religious sanction, as the name of God is not even mentioned. It probably belongs to the same period as the book of *Daniel*, about 160 B.C.

(e) It is of the utmost importance to observe that the Book of *Daniel* was not included in the canon of the Prophets, but in the collection of Writings. It belongs to the class of literature, the

*Apocalyptic*, which was very popular in the two centuries before and the first century after the Christian era. Ezekiel places a Daniel as famed for piety and wisdom between Noah and Job (xiv. 14, xxviii. 3), and a Daniel is mentioned among the exiles who returned with Ezra (Ezra viii. 2). But it is now generally agreed that the *Book of Daniel* was written during the Maccabean period (B.C. 168-160). It consists of stories about Daniel and his companions, which had been handed down for about four hundred years (chapters i.-vi.), and of visions (chapters vii.-xii., with chapter ii.) which deal with four kingdoms, now generally interpreted as the Chaldean or Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, the Greek under Alexander, the Syro-Greek. The little horn (viii. 9) is Antiochus Epiphanes, whose persecution of the Jews provoked the Maccabean revolt. The book is not concerned with the remote future, but in symbols presents the history of the past, the conditions of the present, and the expectations of the immediate future for the comfort and encouragement of the people of God under persecution. *The Book of the Revelation* in the New Testament belongs to the same class of literature, and must be interpreted in the same way.

(f) While there was an interval of about four hundred years between Malachi, the last in the prophetic succession, and John the Baptist, yet the old view that revelation ceased for four centuries has no historic justification. Most of the *Writings* fall within this period. And outside of the canon recognised by Palestinian Judaism, and adopted by

Protestantism generally, there were valuable religious writings, recognised by the Greek-speaking Jews, and also by Roman Catholicism as at least of secondary authority. They are important as letting us know about the belief and life of Judaism in the two centuries before and after the Christian era. Much of the teaching of the New Testament on sin and Satan, resurrection and judgment and even the Second Advent, has its roots in the Apocrypha, the general title given to this collection of writings. *I. Esdras* reproduces and expands *Ezra* in Greek. *II. Esdras* is an apocalypse. *Tobit* and *Judith* are stories illustrative of Jewish popular beliefs and customs. The story of Esther is expanded in *the Additions* to it. *The Wisdom of Solomon* and *Ecclesiasticus* are quite worthy to be placed alongside of the older 'Wisdom' literature. The first expounds the Alexandrian philosophy of the beginning of the Christian era; and the second is similar to the Book of Proverbs. *The Song of the Three Holy Children*, *The History of Susanna*, *The Story of Bel and the Dragon* are popular tales attached to the Book of Daniel. The *Book of Baruch* is an exhortation put in the mouth of Jeremiah's scribe; and the *Prayer of Manasses* a confession ascribed to the King of that name. *I. Maccabees* is an accurate record based on contemporary documents, of the heroic period of Jewish history; and it is a very great loss to young people that this fine story is not generally known. *II. Maccabees*, dealing in part with the same period, has not at all the same value. While these are the writings included in the collec-

tion known in the Protestant churches as the Apocrypha, there are other Jewish writings which are of interest and importance as disclosing what kind of a world, morally and religiously, the Christian faith entered. In recent years there have been a number of valuable discoveries of Jewish writings of the Apocalyptic type, and the study of these helps us to understand the Book of Daniel in the Old Testament, and the Book of the Revelation in the New; and by enabling us to give the proper historical interpretation which this type of literature demands, delivers us from all the vagaries of exposition of these books which at different times have found favour.

(f) This survey does not lower our estimate of the moral and religious value of the Old Testament, and puts us in a better position to understand its message. But it shows us that as these writings came out of the life of a nation, they cannot be treated as though they were all of equal authority, and were absolutely separated from all other literature. They must be studied by the same methods as other literature if we are to base on good ground our conviction that here we have a literature of man's religion, which is the channel of God's revelation.

### CHAPTER III.

#### Christ as Fulfilment of Law and Prophecy.

(1)

**O**THER religions have their Sacred Scriptures and their personal founders; but Christianity stands unique as regards both the Bible and Christ. In no other Sacred Scriptures is there such a record of divine providence in a nation, or such a prophetic succession as is found in the Old Testament; nor is any personal founder elsewhere presented as the completion of a historical process viewed as a divine purpose, as Christ is represented as being in the New Testament. Buddha does not fulfil Brahmanism, Confucius the classical literature of China, nor Mohammed Arabic polytheism, as Christ claimed to fulfil law and prophecy (Matthew v. 17). The progressive divine revelation of the Old Testament found its consummation in Him, the Son alone known by, and knowing the Father, and alone able to reveal the Father unto man (Matt. xi. 27), the Saviour in whom all the promises of God in regard to man's redemption were Yea and Amen (II. Cor. i. 20), the Lord to whom the Church gave a like honour as did the Jewish nation to the Covenant-God Jehovah. The manward movement of God

in revelation, and the Godward movement of man in religion meet in Him Who is God as Man, God-Man. The deepest interest and the highest value of the Bible lies in its relation to Jesus Christ, the Lord, "Ye search the Scriptures because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they that bear witness of me" (John v. 39). Whatever other uses the Bible may have for Christians, its first use is to enlarge knowledge and deepen understanding of Christ Himself. As the object of the Sunday School teacher is to guide and help the scholars in becoming Christians, so he must study and teach the Bible that it may bear witness of Christ, for not in the Bible, but in Christ is eternal life, and eternal life can be found in the Bible only as Christ is found therein. Nothing can be more important than that the teacher should know Christ as fulfilment of law and prophecy.

(2) We must be very careful, however, as to the meaning which we give to the term "fulfilment," as it has too often been misunderstood, and the relation of Christ to the Old Testament mis-represented. (a) It implies contrast as well as continuity, not correspondence but transcendence of the old by the new. Jesus fulfils in that He fills full, corrects the defective, and completes the imperfect. He criticises as well as confirms. We should not try to evade the issue by arguing, as some do, that in the contrasts in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus is criticising scribal interpretations, and not the Old Testament law itself, for these interpretations did correspond with the spirit, purpose, and method of



the law. There are anticipations in the law of the higher principles of the morality of Jesus, but the precepts of the law generally are defective, and need correction. There are three instances which put Jesus' intentions beyond doubt.

(i) As regards divorce, He affirmed that Moses in providing that a bill of divorcement might be given to a wife was not carrying out the divine intentions regarding marriage, but was making a concession, a necessary concession, to human imperfection. "Moses for your hardness of heart suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it hath not been so" (Matt. xix. 8).

(ii) The conception of ceremonial defilement is deeply rooted in the law, and many are the provisions which deal with it; and yet Jesus swept away the foundation of the whole elaborate structure, when He affirmed that "there is nothing from without the man that going into him can defile him: but the things which proceed out of the man are those that defile the man" (Mark vii. 15). The evangelist is correct in suggesting that in so speaking Jesus was "making all meats clean" (verse 19 R.V.).

(iii) The third instance is one to which the attention of Protestant Christians especially needs to be called. To a Puritan Sabbatarianism which bases the obligation to observe the Lord's Day not on its historical association with the Resurrection, but on the Fourth Commandment (Exodus xx. 8—11) as interpreted by the scribes, Jesus' practice must present a great difficulty, and His uncompromising defence of that practice a still greater, that is to

say if they think about it at all. What the commandment enjoined was rest from labour; it conferred a boon, and did not, as afterwards did its interpreters, impose a burden. Jesus was true to the intention of the commandment in setting aside these interpretations. He very emphatically declared that no beneficent activity to meet need or relieve suffering, was inconsistent with that intention. He did not claim for Himself any arbitrary authority to loose or to bind, when He declared "that the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath," for that authority He exercises in accordance with the principle: "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark ii. 27, 28). It is for man's good in the widest sense, including the health of his body, that the commandment is to be expounded and enforced.

(b) Some parts of the law are of only temporary validity, as adaptations to an imperfect stage of moral and religious development, and are altogether superseded for the Christian. The conception of ceremonial defilement has now no meaning, although some of the practices enjoined may still be regarded as sanitary measures. Other parts of the law, if still recognised as valid by the Christian conscience, must be regarded not as arbitrary commands to which a literal obedience must be rendered, but as making some provision for the common human good. St. Paul had "the mind of Christ" (I. Cor. ii. 16) when he contended for, and secured the emancipation of the Gentiles from the Jewish law, the entire law, not the ceremonial only, for he made no such

distinction of moral and ceremonial, and maintained that Christians were not under law, but under grace (Romans vi. 15). In Calvinism there was undoubtedly a relapse to Pharisaic legalism from a genuinely and consistently evangelical morality and religion; and nothing is more necessary to-day than the recognition of the fact that the teaching of Christ alone, as developed and applied by His apostles, is authoritative for the Christian conscience, and that the greater part of the Old Testament law as provisional and preparatory has no longer any validity as a guide to Christian conduct.

(3) It will be generally acknowledged that the Mosaic law is not the law for Christian life, but has been superseded by the new life under grace; but another misconception of the relation between the Old Testament and the New Testament is still maintained in certain circles. According to Augustine's statement, the Gospel is latent in the law, and the law patent in the Gospel. By an allegorical method of interpretation, Christ is everywhere found in the Old Testament. One flagrant illustration, in my knowledge as an actual instance, may be given. Abraham is the father, Isaac the son, the steward the Holy Spirit, Rebekah the human soul; and the function of the Spirit is to win the soul as a bride for Christ. "Wilt thou go with this man?" (Gen. xxiv. 58), is a Gospel invitation. As a boy, I was taken to hear a worthy layman expound the Christian significance of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness. I fear that it was with irreverent amusement that I heard the High Priest's breeches spiritualised (Lev.

xvi. 4). In a commentary on Leviticus which may remain nameless, evangelical theology was found in the anatomy of the animal offered in sacrifice. All this learned and pious trifling must now be swept aside. The historical interpretation is alone the valid interpretation. The Old Testament has an interest and a value of its own, not as a cunningly constructed puzzle, which can be solved only by help of the New Testament, but as a record of human belief, worship, life. For the student of the history of religions even the details of the ritual do not need to have any such artificial significance imposed upon them, but have a genuine interest as showing how the human soul sought to express and satisfy its needs in its approach to God. It is a relief and a gain to escape from this world of shams in this typology, to the world of facts in the candid yet sympathetic study of the slow growth of the religious consciousness of man, fostered by the condescending activity of the revealing God by His Spirit by divers portions and in divers manners. Teachers especially must be careful not to make the Bible appear in any way arbitrary and artificial, but always must present it as altogether and only real.

(4) There is more difficulty in dealing from the modern standpoint with the alleged fulfilment, in the events of the life of Jesus, of predictions of the prophets, as we find that in the New Testament this is the dominant apologetic method in dealing with the Jews. Professor Rendel Harris has conclusively shown that even before the Gospels were written there was a book of *Testimonies*, a

collection of passages of the Old Testament which could be so used, and was generally used. Such a method of interpreting the Old Testament was in accord with the current Jewish scholarship, and thus was effective for its immediate purpose. We must not suppose, however, that Christian believers, and even apostles or evangelists, were, by the inspiration which undoubtedly was theirs, raised above the limitations of their own age and surroundings as regards the method they thus employed, nor that such a method can have the same value for us to-day.

(i) That there are such correspondences between prediction and event may be fully admitted, although some of the correspondences on closer scrutiny appear less real than at first sight. Where there are such correspondences we need not assume a merely supernatural prevision on the part of the prophet, or a wholly supernatural providence on the part of God; for on the one hand the prediction fits into, and is explicable by its context, and on the other hand the event in the life of Christ has also its historical causation. A few instances will make the meaning of this statement clear, and thus it is hoped also make it convincing. That Jesus was born in Bethlehem is regarded by Matthew (ii. 6) as a fulfilment of the prediction in Micah v. 2; but the context shows that the prophet is led to place the birth of the deliverer in Bethlehem as one of the consequences of God's judgment on Jerusalem, and as significant of the humiliation which must be the condition of the exaltation again of the nation; and Luke gives the historical reason for the presence

of the mother of Jesus in Bethlehem at his birth (ii. 5). When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on an ass Matthew (xxi. 5) sees in that fact a fulfilment of the prediction in Zech. ix. 9, and makes it more exact by the assumption that there were both an ass and her colt (verse 2) and that Jesus somehow rode on both (verse 7); whereas Mark, who is the earlier of the evangelists, and nearer the eye-witness, mentions only the colt (xi. 2-7). This is not only more probable in itself, but the prediction, which is in the form of the parallelism dealt with in the previous chapter of this volume, refers undoubtedly to one animal, first in a general, then a more particular description. When we examine the context in the prophet we find that his description is also explicable by the context. It is not as a warrior, but as a Prince of Peace that he will be renowned (*vv.* 9, 10), and as the horse carries the warrior, so the ass is the proper bearer of the Prince of Peace. It is almost certain that it was to convey this same message that Jesus chose the ass, whether He had the passage in His mind or not. We may, if we choose, assume that such coincidences were divinely intended, but whether we do or not, what is important is that we should not regard them as an unintelligible wonder, but see how an historical explanation can make them intelligible.

(ii) There are, however, alleged fulfilments which closer scrutiny shows to be unreal. Matthew (i. 23) finds the virgin birth foretold in Isaiah vii. 14; but scholars are now agreed that the term there used has not this exclusive meaning, but means any

young woman of marriageable age (R.V. maiden); and it is by no means certain, if we interpret the passage by the context, that the prophet is even thinking of the birth of the Messiah. Again, when in the same Gospel (ii. 15). the words of Hosea xi. 1 "Out of Egypt did I call my Son" are connected with the flight into Egypt, what is ignored is that the passage is not a prediction, but a statement of fact; and that it does not refer to an individual, but to the whole nation, Israel, in its childhood, during the sojourn in Egypt. I have made a very careful study of every case of these instances of fulfilment given in the Gospels, and have been led to the conclusion that in most of the cases our exact historical methods of interpreting both the New and the Old Testament would not justify our using them as convincing argument, and that in the real coincidences which remain, such explanations can be offered to make them intelligible as have been given in the two instances above. It is not in such minute, minor details that the evidence for Christ's fulfilment of law and prophecy is to be sought. The argument becomes much more convincing and much more valuable morally and religiously, if we exhibit the connection as the relation of the final stage of a historical process to its preparatory stages.

(5) What again and again in times of danger and disaster encouraged and strengthened the godly in the Hebrew nation was the Messianic hope.

(i) In the strict sense of the word Messiah this hope should be confined to the expectations of a scion of the house of David, who would deliver the



people from the invaders or oppressors, establish his throne in righteousness, rule over a secure and prosperous nation, and even extend his sovereignty over other peoples. The special circumstances under which, and the personal characteristics of the prophet by whom each oracle was uttered, forbids the attempt to formulate a doctrine of the Messiah. Nor from the Christian standpoint is it at all necessary, for while Jesus accepted the confession of His Messiahship, and commended Peter the confessor (Matt. xvi. 16-20), in fulfilling the hope He transcended all details of the predictions. He attached no importance to, while not denying His Davidic descent (Matt. xxii. 41-45); any thought of an earthly Kingship was foreign to His mind; to use His power as Son of God to secure economic prosperity, national security, or general dominion for His people He rejected as a temptation of Satan (that is the most intelligible explanation of the Temptation in the Wilderness, Matt. iv. 1-11); even as regards His Second Advent a national sovereignty is merged in a universal Judgeship and Lordship (Matt. xxiv. 31). This Messiahship, even as transformed in His own mind, He did not claim, till His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the first occasion on which, as has already been indicated, He probably of set purpose fulfilled a detail of Messianic prediction (Matt. xxi. 1-11); and then He was going to function as Messiah in a way which no prophet had ever predicted that the Messiah would act.

(ii) To maintain this reserve in regard to His Messiahship in order that He might not give any



encouragement to popular expectations which He knew He must disappoint, He did not call Himself the Messiah. He used a title which was evidently at that time not generally regarded as Messianic, the *Son of Man*. While there can be no doubt that when used in regard to the Second Advent, as in the declaration to the High Priest (Matt. xxvi. 64, "Henceforth ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven"), the title has reference to the "night vision" of Daniel vii. 13, "Behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him," and such use as is made of it in other Apocalyptic literature which may have been familiar to Jesus. But when used of the earthly lot, the more obvious reference seems to be to the eighth Psalm, which declares alike man's lowliness and greatness. So used on the lips of Jesus it expresses both dignity and humility, the greatness of His calling, and the lowliness of the means of its accomplishment. By this title He both distinguishes Himself from, and identifies Himself with men.

(iii) Although the title, Son of Man, does not itself indicate self-sacrifice as the ultimate measure of that humility, that was present to His mind, probably from the beginning of His ministry, if not earlier, certainly before He began to speak of His sufferings to His disciples, as He did after Peter's confession of His Messiahship (Matt. xvi. 21). There seems little doubt that His anticipa-

tions were confirmed, even if not suggested to His mind by the picture of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah liii. While in Jewish thought this picture had not been regarded as Messianic, yet that does not prove that Jesus Himself meditating on His calling, and seeking such guidance as regards His Father's will as the Holy Scriptures could afford, could not reach the conclusion that, not exclusively as the Son of Man of the Apocalypses, not literally as the Son of David, would He fulfil His calling, but as Saviour through Sacrifice, as was the Suffering Servant. There are indications in the Gospels that this and other passages in the great prophecy of the Exile were directing the mind of Jesus; and it is here undoubtedly that the most intimate contact is to be found between prophecy and the mind of Christ.

(6) In Christ Crucified, the Christian faith possesses the solution of the problem of sin and the problem of pain, in the fact of salvation by sacrifice; and Christ fulfils the Old Testament anticipation of both the problems and their solution.

(i) The contrast between the prophetic and the popular religion has already been noted. The people were concerned about ritual observances, the prophets about moral obligations. God's displeasure might be averted and His favour secured by numerous and costly offerings—so thought the people. Repentance of unrighteousness and reform in justice and kindness could alone turn His judgment into mercy—so thought the prophets. Amid national disaster and destruction the prophets

deepened the sense of sin; and even although there was a relapse after the Exile from the large and lofty prophetic position, yet in the latest code of the law, in the importance attached to the *sin*, and *trespass offerings* the more sensitive conscience which the teaching of the prophets had developed finds an expression. In the Psalms penitence for sin is a prominent feature, even if the desire for the removal of the penalty of the transgression sometimes shows itself the dominant motive. In no other literature can we find such a development of conscience, and even Christian penitence can still use some of the language of the Psalms in approaching God.

(ii) Suffering is everywhere regarded as having a close relation to sin. For the earliest moral reflection, as it still finds expression in Psalm i, the righteous prosper, and the wicked perish. If the wrongdoer does not himself suffer, his punishment falls on his offspring. "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Jer. xxxi. 29, Ezek. xviii. 2). The Book of Job wrestles with the problem of the suffering of the righteous, and no solution is offered except submission to the God whom none can understand and with whom none can contend. The fact that fortune is not according to desert, but that one lot befalls righteous and wicked makes the author of *Ecclesiastes* bitter. The picture of the Suffering Servant offers the only answer in which the mind can find relief, that not only do the righteous suffer with the guilty, and for the guilty, but that their suffer-

ing brings blessing to all, not least of all to themselves. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied" (Is. liii. 11).

(iii) How can sin be forgiven, and its judgment be annulled? That problem is being faced throughout the Old Testament. The popular and the prophetic answers have already been mentioned. The more refined conception even of ritual sacrifice is that this is the way appointed of God in which He will show His grace. As man's faith offers—so God's grace accepts the offering. In the fifty-first Psalm the insufficiency of all animal sacrifices is declared, and the only acceptable offering unto God is held to be the broken and the contrite heart (li. 16-17) "Thou delightest not in sacrifice; else would I give it: Thou hast no pleasure in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." But in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah a still higher conception emerges—that of the vicarious self-sacrifice of the righteous; the righteous servant's soul is made *a guilt offering* for sin (verse 10, R.V. Marg.). Here we are already within sight of Calvary's holy mount. While the ritual sacrifices express imperfectly and satisfy inadequately a real, universal human need, it is in vicarious self-sacrifice that moral and religious content is given to sacrifice. Not by means of the Old Testament ritual, but by this Old Testament prophecy can the Cross of Christ be truly and fully interpreted.

(iv) Among sin's penalties death is reckoned as

the last and worst. There lingers in the Hebrew religion the conception of Semitic heathenism, and indeed of all early religious thought, that the soul survives, but in an abode of the shades to be dreaded, and not to be hoped for. A hope of something to be desired hereafter slowly emerged; but this hope took two forms. First of all the expectation arose that the righteous dead would be raised up from the grave to share in the blessings of the Messianic Age; and this conception of resurrection is extended by Daniel to wicked as well as righteous (xii. 2). Secondly, some of the saints aspired to an unbroken fellowship with God—which even death could not destroy. Although some scholars question this interpretation, that is what the conclusions of Psalms xvi. and xvii. seem to mean. While Jesus transformed, He confirmed the hope of the Resurrection, not by His words only, but by the deed of His own victory over death. The answer He gave to the Sadducees, based the hope of immortality, as in the Psalms, on man's personal relation to God (Matthew xxii. 32).

(7) It is along these lines of a living growth of human faith receptive of, and responsive to divine grace that we should trace the promise of the Old Testament, of which Christ is the fulfilment. A few more illustrations, which have not hitherto been brought into the argument from prophecy may be added.

(i) Jesus assumed in all His teaching the ethical monotheism of the prophets, and that has become a permanent inheritance of mankind. "I am the

Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour " (Isaiah xliii. 3). This sublime declaration needed only to be detached from all national limitations (and the process of universalising the relation of God to man had already begun in the Old Testament) to yield a conception of God for all men. What Jesus did was to reveal in word and deed this God as the Father of all mankind. The more gracious aspects of God are not absent from the Old Testament. Hosea, as we have already seen, thinks of God as a loving, suffering and forgiving Husband.

(ii) The Psalmist compares God's to a father's pity (Psalm ciii. 13), and the prophet God's comfort to a mother's (Isaiah lxvi. 13). But Jesus in Himself as well as His words made God's love, grace, and mercy so convincing a reality that the Fatherhood of God is now a certainty for human faith.

(iii) There are in the Old Testament movements to break the barriers of national exclusiveness. Amos thinks of God as the Judge of all men. Jonah is sent on a mission to heathen Nineveh, and Nineveh repents. Ruth represents a Moabitess as an ancestress of the great King David. But in the time of Christ exclusiveness was rampant, exclusiveness of Jew towards Gentile, and of Scribes and Pharisees towards publicans and sinners. Jesus taught the worth to God of every soul, irrespective of nation, rank, or even character. Thus was a national transformed into a universal religion, as both the conception of God and the estimation of

man excluded all limitations. While Jesus in His earthly ministry offered Himself as Messiah to the Jewish people, Paul interpreted aright His spirit and purpose in offering Him as Saviour of mankind. This is the spectacle of thrilling interest as well as incalculable importance that the Old Testament, interpreted as modern scholarship interprets it, presents to us: the crude and narrow religion of nomad tribes transformed into the final and universal religion for mankind. This is the Divine Drama of Human History.

## CHAPTER IV.

### The Value of the Old Testament for the Christian To-day.

(I)

WHILE the religion of the Old Testament is preparatory, and the revelation is progressive, yet it is not only of historical interest and importance; it has a permanent significance and value. The authority of the Old Testament cannot be the same for the Christian as the authority of the New; and the Christian Church in the past often "Judaised," fell back into legalism and ritualism by treating the whole Bible as one book, equally authoritative in religion and morals throughout. The Christian apostle has a message for us which the Hebrew prophet cannot have. Jesus Christ the Lord, of whom the New Testament is either record or interpretation, reaches beyond and rises above the historical preparation for Him. "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son . . . the effulgence of His glory, and the very image of His substance" (Hebrews i. 1-3). Christ fulfils without destroying the law and the prophets. The New Testament completes, but does not supersede the Old Testament.



The Christian Church was right in retaining the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings as Sacred Scripture. If not all, yet very much of the religion and morality of the Old Testament is confirmed in the faith and duty of the New. Jesus Himself nourished His "inner life" on the Old Testament. Not in controversy and for argument alone did He use these writings, in which He found for Himself a disclosure of the mind and will of His Father. The boy in the Temple sought out the scribes, the interpreters of the Old Testament (Luke ii. 46, 47). As has been suggested in the discovery and fulfilment of His calling, He was guided by the words of the prophets. The evangelists found confirmation of their own faith, as well as argument to win others to believe, in the fulfilment of prophecy. In his exposition of the Gospel for Jew and Gentile, Paul again and again appeals to these ancient oracles. We cannot understand the New Testament unless we know the Old; for the preparation does not pass away before, but passes into and becomes part of the consummation.

(2) There is development of thought and life presented to us within the New Testament, yet the literature covers only two generations. The development is in a transformation of the Jewish inheritance by Christian faith, and in an explication of what is implicit in that faith. An instance of the one is the spiritualising of the Jewish eschatology in the Fourth Gospel, and of the other the theology of the Person of Christ which made evident what the confession of His Lordship involved as regards His

relation to God. The literature of the Old Testament covers a Millenium at least, and the progress as we have seen was so great that the development in the New Testament is quite incomparable with it.

(i) To be able to study such a progress brings with it very great gain. There is a type of Christian thought and life which by its intolerance makes itself almost intolerable. It has a rigid creed in theology and a fixed code in ethics; and it cannot forget anything, nor learn anything. All who are not in agreement in thought and accord in action are for it enemies of the truth, traitors to the Gospel. It conceives, worships, and serves a *static* deity, a God who has said all He has to say once for all, and from whose unchanging glory no new light can or will come to the thought and life of man. It is conceited and confident about its own views, censorious of and arrogant to the views of others. It misrepresents the grace of God by its ungraciousness to man, and is a scandal, or stumbling-block (Matt. xviii. 6, 7, Rom. xiv. 13) to multitudes who might be won for faith, if faith were made more attractive.

As among Sunday School teachers this type is represented, these words have been written, not in any unkindness, but as a warning to any reader who may need it, of the danger of so misrepresenting goodness and godliness to the young. A record such as the Old Testament presents, of God's age-long dealings with men, patient, sympathetic, condescending, imparting truth as it can be received,

imposing duty as it can be rendered, strengthening weakness, and encouraging aspiration, is a rebuke and correction of such a dogmatic and intolerant tendency. It shows that progress is a mark of God's presence and activity with men, not that He Himself changes, but that He adapts His communications to man's capacity. Even if Christ be God's last Word men are but slowly learning the meaning of that Word.

(ii) Life discloses itself in growth; ideas and ideals are best understood as their development is known. What passes away and what abides are in such a process sifted. In all realms of thought and life history is judgment; for its movement is "the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain" (Hebrews xii. 27). What is permanent and universal in the Jewish inheritance of the Christian Church can only by such a study of the development of religion and morals, recorded in the Old Testament, be separated from the temporary and local.

When we have studied such a process, our own type of experience and character will combine these two aspects of living growth, continuity and adaptation, permanence and progress. Our conception of God also will be enlarged and enriched; He will not be a *static*, but a *dynamic* deity, One who is not at rest having finished His work, but One who is ever working to save and bless, even as Jesus Himself has told us: "My Father worketh even until now, and I work" (John v. 17).

Our outlook on the world will become more tolerant and hopeful. We shall not dread every change in creed and code as apostasy, but shall "prove all things" in order that we may "hold fast that which is good," and may "abstain from every form of evil" (I. Thess. v. 21, 22), lest in despising any prophesyings, any words spoken about truth and duty, which are unfamiliar or uncongenial to us, we should "quench the Spirit" (verse 19), the Spirit of the God who not only of old revealed Himself in prophets and apostles, but still in the unfolding by His Spirit of the meaning of His Son is revealing Himself.

Our dealing with others will become wiser, and kinder. We shall not "break the bruised reed," nor "quench the smoking flax," but patiently and graciously adapting ourselves as God did even to "the hardness of men's hearts" (Matt. xix. 8) we shall "bring forth judgment in truth" (Isaiah xlii. 3, Matt. xii. 20). Of the character of the Old Testament as an instance of God's educative method, and its consequent value for teachers, a subsequent chapter will treat.

(3) The history which is contained in the Old Testament has a value for the Christian of to-day, not mainly as an accurate record of facts, but because it gives the standpoint of religion in regard to history. For him who believes in God man is not the sole agent in events, and human progress does not depend on human aspiration and effort alone; God Himself works with and by man, fulfilling His own purpose, which man may help or hinder, accept or

resist. Although the three years of the ministry of Jesus, and the first generation of the Christian community mean far more for us than many centuries of the history of the Hebrew nation, yet in the Old Testament God's Providence in human history is exhibited to us over a much longer period—ten centuries or more—and on a wider scale—not only the nation itself but also the Empires with which it came into contact, and which, as the instruments of God's judgment or mercy, made it what it was.

There is a petty, superstitious view of God's providence which regards Him as constantly intervening by His omnipotence in the order of nature or the course of history for individual private interests. There is a type of piety which thinks of God as directing His Universe for trivial human advantage. While God's care is individual ("the very hairs of your head are all numbered," Matt. x. 30) His goodness is universal (v. 45); and His purpose is world-embracing. God's providence, as the Old Testament exhibits it, is not favouritism but selective action for His own purpose in judgment or mercy. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities" (Amos iii. 2). The elect nation became the martyr nation, and only as the martyr nation could it become the missionary to the nations. (That wider reference is undoubtedly to be found in Isaiah liii). Thus the Old Testament brings home to our reason and conscience the truth of the Divine Providence, but also corrects errors into which we may fall in regard to

that truth; and exhibits that providence not as an arbitrary exercise of omnipotence, but as the fulfilment by moral and religious means of an end of goodness and grace.

(4) This interpretation of human history as divine providence is given by the succession of prophets. It is modern scholarship which has enabled us to recognise the greatness of these messengers of God's mind and will. They do supplement the teaching of the New Testament; and for the complete Christian character and conduct their message of social duty as religious is essential.

(i) Owing to the conditions of time and place, Jesus Himself and the primitive community were placed in an attitude of separation from the society to which they belonged. A secular nationalism was the danger of the hour: subjection to a foreign yoke was the duty. Hence it is easy to assume, and it has been assumed that the Christian, whose citizenship is in heaven, should be indifferent to his earthly citizenship, and that as a pilgrim to the Heavenly City he should not concern himself with the affairs of the Vanity Fair of earth. This error the prophets correct. They exhibit religion as the dominant factor in the history of a nation. While the Christian religion cannot be national in any restrictive sense, but must preserve its inherent universality, yet it is concerned with the policy of nations, as well as the interests of individuals. The individualism into which evangelical Protestantism tends to fall shows the need of the teaching of the prophets, who spoke to a nation.

(ii) These prophets do not deal with abstract generalities about the vocation of a nation; but insist on concrete particulars of the duty of each man to his fellows. They insist on social righteousness, and that includes both justice and mercy. He can do justly only who loves mercy, and he loves mercy who walks humbly with the God who is ever showing mercy to him (Micah vi. 8). This social righteousness is not a substitute for, but an expression of religion.

(iii) Not only does religion express itself in moral conduct, but also in ritual worship, and its constant danger is that ritual shall displace morality. In the popular religion sacrifice had ousted mercy, whereas what God desires is mercy, and not sacrifice (Hosea vi. 6). Jesus on two occasions quotes this saying of the prophet (Matt. ix. 13, xii. 7). In the Christian church creed and sacrament have often thrown character into the shade; and against any such tendency the teaching of the prophets can even to-day serve not only as a protest, but as a protection. Such are some of the many lessons that the prophets can teach us.

(5) If the prophets in their emphasis on social righteousness seem to depreciate religious worship, although it is only a superstitious ritualism which they oppose, the Book of Psalms does full justice to the spirit of devotion. While the New Testament lays much stress on prayer and praise, and there are some instances of both recorded, it does not provide the literature of devotion such as the Book of Psalms offers. It must be fully recognised



that on the one hand the circumstances reflected in many of the Psalms bear little or no similarity to our own, and on the other that the type of piety which sometimes finds expression falls far short of the Spirit of Christ. Under exceptional circumstances, however, we may be able to realise what a psalmist felt: the perils to which during the war we were exposed, and the anxieties we experienced brought home to us the meaning of some of the Psalms as in safer and easier days we had not understood them. Nothing, however, could justify a lapse from the Christian spirit. No indignation, however strong, against the wrongs done by the enemy could justify the use of the imprecatory Psalms, and no conviction, however deep, of the righteousness of our own cause, could justify our making our own the self-confidence with which some of the Psalmists assert their own merits, and claims on God's favour. As the Psalms are the human response to the divine revelation, they do betray the limitations of the human soul, even when worshipping or communing with God.

But, while this must be admitted, what is truest, best, and most intense in human devotion finds an expression in the Psalms excelled in no other religious literature. Confession of sin, Petition for Pardon, Confidence in God, Assurance of Salvation, Aspiration after Holiness, Intercession for blessing on others, Hope of future good—all these notes are struck; and most of all do we hear the melody of praise, Adoration of God, Gratitude for His Gifts, Consecration to His Service. It may be said



with confidence that no other parts of the Bible have to the same extent provided the Voice for the human soul in the greatest crises of life. All kinds of men in all sorts of experiences have found in the Psalms, as Jesus did upon the Cross (Mark xv. 34, Luke xxiii. 46), the language fittest for man's approach to God.

(6) The Wisdom literature does not use so universal a language as do the Psalms, as many pray and praise who do not often ponder the meaning and the aim of life, the problems of thought. But so long as the mystery of providence in the distribution of good and evil, weal and woe, continues to challenge and defeat the mind of man, a poem such as *Job* will captivate the thoughtful man. Even *Ecclesiastes* will appeal in some moods, and its emphasis on some aspects of life will compel us to consider what reasons we can show for refusing that mood. This Wisdom literature shows that God's revelation does not offer us ready-made answers to all our questions, that God is better pleased with the man who will not accept as true what the facts he knows deny, than the man who in the interests of his theory ignores all the facts that contradict it, *e.g.*, Job is justified and not his friends.

There is thus no part of the Old Testament that may not be of value to us. Not all parts will equally appeal, nor the same parts at different times. A mechanical reading of the Bible through time after time as a meritorious task is not the best use which can be made of it. We may be guided by our needs, interests, tastes in regard to the parts we

study most closely, although for a full understanding of the parts, a knowledge of the whole as a whole is a necessary condition; and, if properly attempted, will prove of intense interest. But we must never depreciate what we have not yet learned to appreciate. Given the appropriate conditions, we may discover values we had never expected in portions we had hitherto neglected.

It is no depreciation of the New Testament to say that the Old Testament as well as the New is necessary for "the man of God," that he "may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II. Tim. iii. 17); for God's wisdom and grace appointed that the Son should be sent "when the fulness of the time came" (Gal. iv. 4); and the preparatory revelation was necessary for the final, not to be superseded by it, but to be transfigured within it, to be taken up into its fulness.

## CHAPTER V.

### The Old Testament and Religious Education.

(I)

HAVING dealt with what the Old Testament should be to and for the Sunday School teacher as a Christian believer, we can now pass to consider what is its distinctive meaning and especial value to him as a teacher. What is the place and power of the Old Testament in religious education?

(i) We have already dealt with religion in a previous chapter, and need not now repeat the discussion. Religion is man's relation to God—belief, trust, surrender—the whole personality as thinking, feeling, willing, exercised towards God as truth, love, holiness. The Christian religion is that relation as mediated by Christ who brings God near to men in revealing Him as Father, and brings men near to God in redeeming them from sin to be His children. Religious education has for its object the bringing about of this relation as soon as possible, and the aim of Christian religious education is to bring the child in belief, trust, and surrender to Christ, that He may so relate the child to the Father.

(ii) Education is sometimes regarded as *bring-*

*ing out, leading forth* what is already in the child; but this conception rests on a mistaken etymology. Educate is derived from the Latin verb *educare*, to bring up a child physically or mentally, to rear, and not from the Latin verb *educere*, to lead or draw out, to bring away, although the second word is sometimes used in almost the same sense as the first. In the sense of instruct, inform, it corresponds in meaning to the Latin verb *docere*, with its intensive form *edocere*, to teach thoroughly. It is necessary to call attention to the proper derivation, as a false theory of education is justified by the wrong etymology. It is assumed that all that education has got to do is to evolve what is already all involved, to make *patent* what is *latent*. Even if we consider the universe as a whole, what is evolved need not be involved in the universe itself, as the finite is so related to the infinite that God may communicate to the Universe in the process of evolution what was not hitherto involved. Thus we need not assume that mind and life were latent in matter from the beginning, and became only patent at a certain stage of the creative process. Evolution may be not explication, but *epigenesis*, because God, out of His infinite resources, by His creative activity adds to the sum of finite reality. When we consider any part of the whole Universe, this view of evolution is still more necessary. The seed does not include in itself all that the plant becomes; its development depends on its capacity to assimilate, make its own, and adapt for its own use the nourishment of its life that the environment contains. So with the

child mentally, morally and spiritually; he does not contain in himself all he afterwards becomes; he, too, must assimilate from his environment mental, moral, spiritual, the content of his developed experience and character. The child is not by nature religious and Christian, and would not, apart from the appropriate environment, become religious and Christian. He has a receptivity for religious and Christian instruction, and influence.

(iii) It is necessary to insist on this, as it has been maintained that the child must be left free to express or realise himself, that the most the teacher can do is to direct a self-contained, self-sufficient development, and that he must not attempt to communicate the contents of his own religious or Christian life. It is true that capacity can be developed only by exercise, and the teacher must not so impose himself on the scholar as to suppress the exercise; but the exercise cannot be *in vacuo*. The appropriate environment must be provided, out of which the content for the developing capacity must be assimilated. Under-feeding is as dangerous for life as over-feeding; and the child must be presented with enough in his environment which he can assimilate to keep his capacity in adequate exercise. Without forcing the capacity to premature development, the teacher must present in his instruction and influence whatever can be received at each stage of the development. In education there must be the twofold aim: the development of every capacity of the child must be stimulated, and the content to be assimilated by that capacity must be presented, and

both are only aspects of one process, for the capacity is developed only as the content is assimilated, and the content can be assimilated only as the capacity develops; in life nourishment and growth are inter-dependent.

(iv) In the Christian religion what is primary and imperative is faith, and faith is receptive of, and then responsive to grace. What must be developed that the child may become religious in the distinctively Christian type of religion is *faith*, the capacity to accept and appropriate Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, not theological formulæ about Christ, but His own truth and grace in belief, trust, and surrender such as at the stage of his development he is capable of exercising. Through the teacher Christ must become the mental, moral and spiritual environment of the child, not in any narrow sense as excluding the goodness, the heroism, the tenderness of other personalities, but as the fulfilment of all that these may promise.

(v) While we must insist that Christ must be presented in instruction and influence as the constant object of faith, and God in Him, we must no less insist that the laws of this development, mental, moral, and spiritual must be obeyed. There must be no forcing of the pace in religion and morals. Adolescent capacity must not be expected in childhood, or adult in adolescence; no attempt must be made to induce the experiences appropriate to one stage of development at an earlier. The mental law corresponding to the vital of assimilation is *apperception*; that nothing can be received or retained in

the mind which cannot be attached to what is in the mind already. An adult experience has no points of contact with the child experience; and cannot become really a part in that experience. This very important consideration must be more fully explored in the subsequent discussion; but here it must be insisted on at the very outset.

(vi) It is sometimes argued that the individual development reproduces and must reproduce the racial evolution, and that consequently the education of the child must be conformed to the education of the race. That there is an analogy may be admitted; but it must not be so pressed as to force the demand for a rigid correspondence. When it is urged, for instance, that the boy is at the stage of moral development described in *Judges*, and that we should not expect more from him, or that as Jesus came later in human history, the child is not ready to learn much about Him, the theory becomes an absurdity. Peril, endurance, courage, strength, do interest the boy; and certainly the book of *Judges* does record the doings of such heroes as the boy will admire. But the lust, cruelty, and savagery which disfigure some of these stories, the boy must be taught not to tolerate, but to condemn. To become manly he need not pass through a savage phase, although he may need to know how to fight the lusts that war against the soul (I. Peter ii. 11).

Again because many centuries elapsed, and had to elapse, before the fulness of the times for the mission of the Son of God, it is not necessary that the child should retrace the long slow process of

religious evolution in the race. He need not be kept in the religion of nature before he is brought into the religion of grace. The theology of the person and work of Christ is not for the child; but as the child's earliest and best environment is the home, and the love it offers—so may the tenderness, gentleness, kindness and helpfulness of Jesus through the stories of His life be made real, and through Christ the child may be led to the love of God. God's goodness in nature, and in animal as well as human life should supplement, but must not supersede that truth embodied in a tale, which enters in at lowly doors, also the door of a child's imagination and affection.

(vii) As has already been indicated, the Old Testament is the record of a progressive revelation, and its literature presents to us many stages of the religious development of man. The analogy is close enough to afford a guiding principle in teaching. Chronology alone would here mislead. The Gospels are much later in time than the prophets, and they do record a fuller revelation of God in His Son, and yet the Gospels can be taught to children as the prophets cannot. A rigid correspondence of the progressive revelation and the developing child cannot be insisted on; and yet we can find in the record of the one at different stages just the kind of material, which is best adapted to instruct and influence the other. Granted that the New Testament contains all the truth and grace necessary for salvation, granted also that there is in the New Testament teaching in story, and parable, simple enough for



a child, and also doctrine which tests the understanding of a man; yet the Old Testament does contain material so valuable for religious education, that, despite any difficulties it presents to teachers, it must not be neglected.

(2) It is the recognition of the two facts—(i) that the lesson material and not only the method of treatment must be adapted to the stage of the development of the scholars, and (ii) that the Bible abundantly supplies material so adapted—which has led to the introduction of the *Graded Courses of Lessons* by the British Lessons Council. I was for a number of years a member of the Committee, which is now merged in the Council, when only a Uniform lesson was provided. In our efforts to prepare such a course we were being constantly confronted with two difficulties inherent in our task, which we could not completely overcome, and which resulted in defects in our work, of which we were much more aware than could be any of our numerous outside critics. It was quite impossible Sunday after Sunday to provide a lesson which would be suitable for infants and seniors. Lessons which were much needed by the one type of scholar had to be omitted because quite unsuitable for the other. To meet the average need accordingly much admirable material in the Bible had to be left out altogether, which was well adapted for the special needs of one age or another. It seemed desirable that the senior scholars should before leaving school, know something of the teaching of the prophets and the apostles, the agents of the divine revelation

to men; but if such lessons were provided there was at once an outcry from the teachers of the younger scholars that they must not have didactic lessons, but there must always be a story to be told. Full justice could not be done either to the needs of the scholars or to the wealth in the Bible to meet those needs.

While I recognise the practical difficulties in many schools in the way of the adoption of Graded Lessons, it must here be very strongly insisted that the very best use of the Bible cannot be made in religious education for scholars of all ages, unless by the grading of the lesson material, necessary because of the gradual development of the scholars, possible because of the variety offered in the Bible.

(3) We need not now take into account the two principles which have been adopted by the American International Lessons Committee, what is called the adapted uniform and the close grading. To take one lesson for all grades, and then by additional material to adapt it to the different grades, is in my judgment to make "confusion worse confounded." To provide a different lesson for each year—seventeen or eighteen in all—is to make a demand on the Sunday Schools for which there is no need. I am concerned only with the departmental grading of the British Lessons Council. The departments recognised are the Beginners (three to five years), the Primary (six to eight), the Junior (nine to eleven), the Intermediate (twelve to fourteen), the Senior (fifteen to seventeen). The indications of age are only approximate, as the development of

all children is not uniform, and there are many conditions, social, educational, etc., which retard or advance that development. Even if the Junior and Intermediate Departments are not separate, but form the general school, the younger scholars on the one hand and the older on the other should be separated.

What is the justification from the standpoint of psychology of this grading?

(i) In distinguishing the stages of development, there are certain cautions which must be observed. *First*, as has already been indicated, development is not uniform, and therefore age does not indicate exactly what phase has been reached. *Secondly*, there is a unity and continuity in human personality, which makes it inadmissible for us to do what in some crude psychological statements is done, namely, to attempt to fix rigidly the age at which any function or activity of personality emerges. Sense, imagination, emotion, reason, conscience, are not like clothes, which can be put on, or put off at a given moment. All we can rightly say is that at a certain stage of development, one or other function or activity is relatively more prominent and dominant. Just as the view held by some French sociologists, that the savage has an entirely different mentality from the civilised man is now generally discredited, so may we set aside any suggestion that the mind of the child is so different from that of the adolescent or the adult, that it must be regarded as of another kind. The child may and ought to survive in the man, so that the secrets of the heart of the child may lie open to him. Whatever is

said about the characteristics of any stage of development must, therefore, be always taken with the qualification that what is common is more than what is different, and that consequently mutual understanding and intercourse are possible. The transitions are gradual, the past is taken up into the present, and the present passes into the future.

*Thirdly*, it is a grievous mistake to assume, as is sometimes done, that Christian religion and morality is so bound up with abstract theological or ethical conceptions, that it cannot be imparted without them. This mistake has led some in one of two wrong directions. The older type of teacher tried to instruct the child in these conceptions when he was quite unable to understand them, or get any good out of them. The newer type of teacher is sometimes so afraid of forcing a premature development, that he fails to realise how much the child is capable of receiving of what is distinctively Christian. Through the imagination and the affections the child can be brought into living contact with Christ.

(ii) With these cautions the attempt may be made to indicate some of the characteristics of the successive stages of development.

(a) In the earliest years the development is most rapid, and hence the need of a Beginners as well as a Primary Department. Although there are common characteristics of these six years, yet the capacities of receiving instruction are growing very quickly, and must be taken account of in the method as well as the matter of instruction. Consciousness

in the child is only gradually becoming self-consciousness; the outward interests and attracts as the inward does not; persons influence conduct through the affections as principles could not through the conscience. Sensation, imagination, emotion are the potent factors, not reflection, reason, conscience. The world around with which the child is in immediate contact, limits the range of his knowledge, and what lies beyond can be brought within the knowledge only as the unknown can be attached to the known. Hence the story which deals with familiar things must be used. For instance, God's goodness must be taught not in general terms, but in relation to the child's own life; God gives food, and clothing, and home, God cares for birds and beasts which the child knows. An interest in foreign missions can be begun by talking about the babies of other lands far away. Jesus can be made dear as on the one hand the child and on the other the Helper and Friend of children, as well as of sick and sorrowing people.

The lively imagination of the child takes the form of what as a characteristic of primitive thought is generally called *animism*, the ascription even to things of the life and other qualities of which he is himself aware. His emotions also are very quick, and he responds very readily to the influence of parents and teachers. Close companionship is a condition of strong and enduring influence. As the impulse to action is strong, and the sensibility to the environment keen, action assumes the form of imitation. The child will be quick to do whatever

he sees done, or is told has been done. Hence the need of the greatest care to suggest to his mind only what is worthy of imitation. To dwell on evil is to stimulate to evil. As both imagination and emotion depend on sense-perception, objects should be used in illustration of what is being taught in words, and the child should have the means of reproducing these objects for himself. What he has himself made he knows and remembers better than what has only been shown to him. Hence lessons must be chosen which will allow the use of such methods. The tendency to selfishness must be counteracted not only by the companionship of the teachers and other scholars, but also by such teaching as will encourage helpfulness to others. As the child is naturally fearful, lessons must be avoided that would strengthen this tendency, and those given which encourage trust. The child's curiosity must not be forgotten. He first of all asks, What? and then Why? and How? Behind these questions there lies the need or wish to join the new fact to what is in the mind already; he is seeking a point of contact for what he is learning with what he already knows.

(b) All these characteristics of the child in the Beginners' Department are found in the child in the Primary Department, but some are weakening and others strengthening. There is an increase of independence of the environment and an emergence of individual traits. The tendency to selfishness is being brought more under control by the spirit of companionship and helpfulness to others. As a fund of experience has been gathered, the imagina-

tion has more material to work with, and is not so immediately dependent on sense. This is one of the causes of a fault, which is too harshly described as lying, as the child does not always distinguish what has been, and what he thinks has been. He easily confuses fancy and fact. His desire to live his own life on the one hand, and to gain the favour or avoid the displeasure of others on the other hand may also lead to deception. The growing sense of power brings with it the temptation to use that power, even unkindly and cruelly, and needs to be directed towards helpfulness of others. The feeling of independence may prompt disobedience, but can be controlled by personal affection. The rebel against rules will yield to the wishes of those whom he loves. Any tendency to superstition can be met by wise teaching regarding the relation of cause and effect, leading up to the truth of God's rule over all. The religious interest at this period often seems to wane, but the interest in life, and therefore in biography, waxes. Moral instruction must not, however, be obtruded, but the story itself must be so told as to influence morally. Reason and conscience are not yet very active. What has been said must always be understood with the qualification already noted, that individuality is now becoming more marked, and differences of capacity and character show themselves.

(c) In boyhood or girlhood there is less growth of body or brain. Play and manual work command interest. Too great a demand must not be made on the mind. Energies are being stored up for the



rapid development which follows in adolescence. The animistic tendency is disappearing. Companionship counts for more than in the child. Selfishness more readily yields to social impulse. Conscience is more developed. There is a growing interest in nature, and elementary science attracts. The conceptions of cause and law influence the mind more than before. A strong interest in history develops; there is a desire not only to know facts, but to understand the connections of facts. A quotation of some length may here be given, as it is of so great importance to the teacher, and so relevant to the subject of this book. Mrs. Baines, in her study on "The Historic Sense Among Children," comes to this conclusion. "Introduce the subject of history into the curriculum as early as the age of seven or eight, or soon after children can count and read, making no difference between boys and girls. Up to the age of twelve or thirteen, history should be presented in a series of striking biographies and events, appearing as far as possible in contemporary ballads and chronicles, and illustrated by maps, chronological charts, and as richly as possible by pictures of contemporary objects, buildings and people. This series should appear in chronological order, the biographies themselves forming the basis of the chronology. These biographies should be chosen from the field of action and interest allied to children's lives; that is, they should be chosen from the personal, military and cultural aspects of history, and scarcely at all from the political or intellectual life. Great pains should be taken with



the first presentation, since it plays so important a part in the historic memory. The whole field of general history should be covered in this way, and should be taken from such sources as the Bible, Homer, Plutarch, the Norse Sagas, tales of Indian warfare and pioneer life, voyages of great discoverers. These should be given in their original forms, only modified by such omissions as are demanded by youth and inexperience" (*Studies in Education*, p. 92, quoted by Pease in *An Outline of a Bible-School Curriculum*, pp. 145, 146). The moral of these stories must never be obtruded, but the boy or girl will be quick to feel and appreciate the moral force of the history. As the mind develops the cruder theological ideas of the child may be corrected. Conscience is becoming more active, and the social sympathies are widening. As the memory is growing stronger greater demands may now be made upon it than at the earlier periods.

(d) In the Intermediate Department are the adolescents, "standing with reluctant feet where the brook and river meet." Boyhood is on the way to manhood, and girlhood to womanhood. This is a period of changes crucial for the whole after-life of body, brain and mind. The fact of sex enters into the consciousness as it had not before. The imagination becomes more poetic; the social spirit is more marked in both comradeship and hero-worship; there is much imitation of the grown-up, and not always of what is best in men or women. While there is an increase both of vitality and energy, yet there is also languor and depression. The moods

are more changeful. As instability is the general feature of the period, conversion is said to be more frequent than either before or after. Although statistics of such a kind must be used with caution, the curve of the number of conversions, according to Starbuck, rises from twelve to sixteen, and falls from sixteen to twenty (*The Psychology of Religion*, Chap. III.). The interest in literature is more general. Of the books of the Bible the Gospels are said to be preferred, as the adolescent is seeking a guide to thought and life. The tendency to ask questions for the sake of knowledge, which is greatest at about fourteen, is in the young man or woman often followed by a period of doubt and struggle for a reasonable certainty. Adolescence is idealistic and romantic, dreaming of great things to be done; the future attracts more than the present. It is the record of great personalities, great in character and achievement, which fires the imagination, and kindles the desire for a like greatness. It is probable that at no other period of life can the person of Jesus be made so attractive and authoritative. A more immediate effect of moral and religious instruction and influence may be expected. But as the period is full of promise, if the opportunity is seized, so is it full of peril, if the young soul meets with indifference or neglect.

(e) Although in many Sunday Schools the scholars are not retained beyond the Intermediate Department, and that is the most serious token of failure in the methods or matter of instruction in the earlier grades, a School which is as it should be

will also have the young men and young women in the Senior Department, or Bible Class. Personally I have a preference for the Minister's Bible Class. In any case at this stage it is not necessary to have a number of small classes, but one class for each sex should suffice. The reason and the conscience are so developed, that independence in thought and life is desired, and the teacher must guide and encourage rather than instruct and command. Interests should be widened, sympathies enlarged, obligations increased, activities stimulated. There may be a phase of scepticism on moral and religious principles, which must be dealt with candidly, and appreciatively. To treat doubt as sin, and to condemn it is to do untold injury. Questions should be answered, enquiry and study encouraged, misconceptions removed, reasons for faith offered, independence respected, originality welcomed. What should be insisted on is this, that good and godly habits should be maintained, even while the reasons for them and the motives of them are undergoing this scrutiny. The Bible as a whole should now be studied, the Christian ideas and ideals examined, the relation of Christian truth to knowledge generally indicated. In young people of defective education, and arrested development this phase may not be evident, but the teacher should be prepared to have to deal with it, and should be willing to fit himself for the hard but rewarding effort. Human personality is so varied, human development so varying, experience so different, and character so complex, that no wise and modest enquirer will imagine that

psychology can exhaust its mystery, while using all the aid that it can offer.

(4) It would clearly be beyond what the space at my disposal allows for me to attempt even to offer a complete curriculum for the Graded Sunday School; only illustrations of how the principle of grading should be applied can be offered, and these must be confined to the Old Testament, although equally applicable, *mutatis mutandis*, to the New.

(i) It is assumed that the lessons in the Beginners' Course cannot be confined to Bible lessons, that on the one hand nature lessons, and on the other stories from other sources than the Bible may be used; and that not only because there is not enough Biblical material for this grade, but because what the child should learn at this stage of his development may be best taught by these other means. The stories which should be taken from the Old Testament should deal with God's power, wisdom, and goodness in His care and bounty in nature and the home, and not for the children themselves, but for all peoples, and even for the beasts and birds of whom the child has knowledge. They should also deal with deeds of human kindness and helpfulness, especially of other children, so that the child may be made to feel that he can show his love for God by doing as God does, and what pleases God. At page 93 it has been shown what kind of stories about Jesus should also be used.

(ii) In the Primary Department the same kind of stories must be used. The stories of the Creation may be simply told. The outlook upon nature may

be widened, and need not be so closely confined to the objects close at hand. More stress can be laid now on the duties the child owes to God—praise and prayer—and to others, parents, brothers and sisters, companions, those who are in sorrow and need. Here too it is quite evident that the Bible does not, and cannot provide adequate material, and the literature of fairy tale and legend must also be used. With the exception of some of the stories about Jesus from the Gospels, the Old Testament affords more stories than the New, adapted both as regards content and form for the mind of the child. The interest of the story must fall within the range of the interests of the child, and the details of the story must be such as can be brought within the reach of his experience. God's care for children, *e.g.*, Ishmael, when cast out with his mother (Gen. xxi. 14-21), and what children can do for others, *e.g.*, the slave-maiden of Naaman (II. Kings v. 2-4), are specially appropriate subjects.

(iii) As the boy or girl becomes more active, and comes into contact with a wider range of human activities, it is God as working not only in nature but in history also, who must be presented in the lessons. Great events and great persons appeal to the love of the exciting, the heroic, the venturesome. Analysis of character would at this stage be out of place; description as vivid and rapid as can be of action, strong, bold, even dangerous is what is wanted. The records of war cannot be avoided, but what should be emphasised here is not the pain, loss, and grief inflicted, but the moral qualities of endurance, courage, loyalty, devotion shown, and also

the possibility of even greater victories of peace. The interest, which such stories meet, cannot be suppressed, but should be directed. The boy is not to be taught to be a savage, but only as brave for higher as is the savage for lower ends. While each lesson should be so complete a unity in itself, that it leaves a distinct enduring impression, it is now desirable to aim at some continuity in the lessons—so as to exhibit God's continuous working in the course of history. This history should not be confined to the Biblical records, but should include the stories of missionaries and martyrs of the Christian Church. The boy or girl should learn that even now there is the duty and privilege of being God's fellow-worker, hearing His call, and following His lead. The biographies of prophets and Kings, of all the leaders of men, with which the Old Testament abounds, offer a rich material. Not all the details need be recalled; interest must be won and attention held by selecting what illustrates just those qualities which the young admire and desire to imitate. It is not an adult piety or morality that is to be taught, but just such religion and morals as will most stimulate the development of the boy or girl.

(iv) For the scholars in the Intermediate Department, biography with more emphasis on the historical background than in the Junior Department, is still the most appropriate channel of instruction and influence. The interest here is, however, not so exclusively in deeds as in character. As the imagination of the youth is forming ideals with a view to plans for the future career, as the capacity

for hero-worship is easily stimulated, as the religious emotions are more ready for development, the hero who will satisfy these varied interests must be held before him for his admiration, homage, and reverence. Jesus may now be depicted as the Hero of Heroes. This is no depreciation of His Saviourhood or Lordship, but it is along this path that the adolescent may be led to the full appreciation of what Christ is and does for those who commit themselves to Him. If in children's hymns Jesus may be described as "gentle Jesus, meek and mild," although even for them there is danger in too much "cloying sweetness," for the adolescent it is His strength, courage, endurance, fidelity, self-sacrifice which should be emphasised. The Old Testament presents many heroic fore-runners, as the New Testament heroic followers of this Hero of Heroes. At this stage of development the moral dangers, including intemperance and impurity, to which youth is exposed, the moral duties to which it is called, and the religious decision for Christ and for God and goodness in Him, which as opportune as imperative may all be more explicitly treated; not in abstract principles, but in concrete instances. A story may be selected, not for its general interest, but to illustrate a particular principle. In my book, *A Course of Bible Study for Adolescents* (N.S.S.U.). I have gathered the material the Bible offers for such necessary instruction. As the youth or maiden is going out into the world from the home and the school, it is now fitting that the fields of service that are in the world may be described. The idea of a King-



dom of God as being realised in human society is an inspiring ideal, to which, if it is worthily presented, youth should respond with enthusiasm. The history of the Hebrew nation as of the Christian Church, is the record of the coming of that Kingdom.

(v) In the Senior Department there may be attempted what has hitherto been quite impossible. There can now be systematic study. The Bible as a literature can now be discussed; the date, authorship, occasion, purpose, literary character, and historical value of the writings of which it is composed can be dealt with. The teaching of the prophets, presented in chronological order, may exhibit the progressiveness of the divine revelation preparatory to, and perfected in Christ. It is such a positive presentation of what the Old Testament is, and of the revelation which it enshrines, that it is best fitted to meet the doubts and difficulties which to-day trouble so many minds. The theology and ethics of the Old Testament may be outlined, not after the manner of a text-book, but always with reference to the historical occasions when a new truth was imparted to the mind of prophet, psalmist, or sage. The contrast and continuity of the old and the new covenant may be illustrated by many instances, such as those Jesus presents in the Sermon on the Mount. A comparison of the Hebrew religion with other neighbouring religions, if the teacher has the adequate knowledge, may serve to bring out its uniqueness. The Social Problem, which is commanding so great an interest to-day, is present in the prophetic writings; and, changed as are the conditions, the



principles they proclaimed are no less applicable now. At this last stage of the development, the teacher commands reserves of interest, influence and instruction, if he will but learn to use them, such as owing to the limitation of the capacity of the scholars were not previously within his reach.

No attempt has been made to supply courses in detail, as the British Graded Courses are constructed on the principles here advocated, and the exposition of these principles is given to help teachers to make a more intelligent and effective use of those courses. What I hope I have proved is that the Old Testament is necessary to, and adapted for use in religious Christian education.

## CHAPTER VI.

### How to Teach the Old Testament.

#### (I)

**I**N the preceding chapter some indication has been given of the matter to be taught; in the present chapter an attempt must be made to deal with the method of teaching. As the teacher must himself learn the content of his teaching properly, it will be necessary to say something about the method of study.

It is assumed that the reader of these pages cannot go to the Holy Scriptures in their original tongues, but must use an English translation. For study the Revised Version should always be preferred, and the notes in the margin of variant readings or alternative renderings should always be carefully consulted. Weymouth's or Moffat's Translations of the New Testament can also be warmly commended. But no teacher who wants to be thoroughly effective should be content with so reading the passage or passages prescribed for the lesson, the whole writing should at least be read over carefully. Minute exposition of, or exhortation on a passage is a bad method of teaching. Even if in accordance with a custom for which no good reason can now be offered, the lesson is read in class, the teacher should be familiar with the whole context. An event should be told in its adequate historical setting, so that its significance in the course of the history should be made intelligible. A person should be described

with sufficient fulness of details regarding his character and career to make a distinct enduring impression. In a didactic lesson it may be necessary to sketch the course of an argument, to narrate the occasion, or indicate the purpose of the utterance. From an Introduction to the Old Testament the teacher should learn all he can about the authorship, date, occasion and purpose of a writing. He should be able to appreciate its literary character, whether poetry or prose; he should seek to estimate its historical value, so as not to put ancient tradition on the same level of trustworthiness as contemporary testimony. A book on the theology of the Old Testament will enable him to understand the moral and religious teaching, and to place it properly in the progressive divine revelation. The aim of all this study is to avoid imposing his own opinions on the writer, and to discover as fully as can be what the writer meant as God's message by him.

(2) Such a method of study will result in a method of teaching which is not arbitrary and artificial, but corresponds accurately with the contents of the teaching. There must be sincerity in apprehending, and consequent candour and honesty in conveying that content. The teacher must not only speak truly as he thinks, but must spare no pains to make his thought true. In conveying truth, however, the capacity of the scholar to receive it, and to respond to it, must be taken into account. A true statement may make a false impression, and of that the teacher must beware. The scholar, when he grows up, ought not to be in the position of

regarding his teacher as having deceived him, as having taught as fact what he now discovers the teacher did not regard as fact. A scholar with growing knowledge should not have much to unlearn; and even if there are things he must unlearn, the unlearning should not come as a shock to him, but follow from the unfolding of his own mind.

It is not necessary, or even desirable for the teacher to insist when he is telling a fairy tale, or legend, or parable to a child that it is not fact, but fancy; for as the child learns to distinguish fact from fancy for himself, he will give the lesson its proper place; but the teacher must not emphasise the story as fact, for when the child discovers it is not, he will feel that he has been deceived. When the child begins to ask questions, as much explanation should be offered as he can understand, and he should be told that when he is older, the fuller explanation which he cannot now understand will be given.

With the growing boy or girl in whom the historic or literary sense is being awakened, it would seem both necessary and desirable that some account should be given of how a narrative came to be, how songs were sung about great events or persons, how traditions were handed down from generation to generation, the father telling them to his children, how these tales of the past were committed to writing. If the scholar has not been taught the dogmatic view that the Bible is infallible in all the historical details—facts and figures—which it records, not only will this kind of explanation add

interest to the narrative, but he will be gradually initiated into that historical view of the Bible which his growing knowledge will not challenge, but confirm. Even if the scholar has from his parents learned the dogmatic view, with care and tact he can be led to see that God's use of such means for His ends is worthy of His wisdom and goodness, His stooping down to men to make them His fellow-workers. Not harsh denial of a false view, but gentle substitution of the true view is the way of wisdom and goodness, as it is God's way. Even with adolescents, and still more with adults, the attempt should be made to show, as I have done in the earlier chapters, that the meaning and worth of the Bible as the record of the divine revelation is not affected because it has the characteristics of human literature, even when the writers were inspired of God. Too long has there been concealment and compromise; courage must be joined with consideration. That the task is delicate and difficult must be admitted, but probably our fears exaggerate its dangers, and the venture of faith to speak truly of the Word of truth would find its reward in scholars who had learned to know and to love the Bible in its true meaning and full worth.

(3) Without using such a phrase as the progressiveness of the divine revelation, convenient as that is for the adult mind, behind all teaching of the Bible that fact should be recognised.

(i) The child's religious ideas and moral ideals must not be confused by representing as God's mind and will for Him the religion and morals of the

earlier ages as recorded in the Bible. The boy or girl knows from personal experience what education is, how he or she must learn not all at once, but one thing after another. God must be represented as kindly, gently, and forbearingly leading men step by step from mistakes about Himself or their duty to His own truth. Children must not be allowed to think that God wanted a human sacrifice, although Abraham is represented as having thought that He did, or that He wished the Canaanites to be exterminated, although the religious beliefs and customs of that age required that they should be. The difference between the earlier and the later teaching must be recognised.

(ii) Jesus, in His own teaching, laid down two principles of the divine method of dealing with men, He justified the provision of the law in regard to the bill of divorcement (Mark x. 4), on the ground of the hardness of the heart of those to whom it was given, and yet He condemned a laxity of interpretation for which no such reason could be offered. He gave as a reason for the gift of the Spirit as a guide into all the truth in the future, the necessity of His limiting His own teaching in the present by the disciples' capacity to receive. "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now . . . the Spirit of truth shall guide you into all the truth" (John xvi. 12, 13); and yet He made demands on their intelligence to which they were not always able to respond. We may call these the principles of *accommodation* and *reserve*.

(iii) While the teacher would not think of using

these terms, he can simply explain those principles to his scholars from the practice of parents or teachers in dealing with children. They try to teach in such a way that the child will understand, and try not to teach what the child cannot understand. Such an explanation can be used to give the scholars a finer sense of God's grace, the stooping-down of His love, to meet the needs of men. How beautiful a picture of God as caring for His people as the mother-bird for her brood is given in Deut. xxxii. 11.

“ As an eagle that stirreth up her nest,  
That fluttereth over her young,  
He spread abroad His wings, he took them,  
He bare them on his pinions.”

If the principle is held fast that revelation can come only in religion, that grace can be imparted only as faith receives it, that the truth can come to a mind only as it can find points of contact with the thoughts already in that mind (the psychological law of *apperception*), any difficulty that the progressiveness of revelation may present will surely disappear. God does not by supernatural acts override the conditions of human development. Even if reason apprehends truth imperfectly, it does apprehend truth; even if conscience appreciates right inadequately, it does appreciate right. To demand and expect moral and religious infallibility at every stage in a divine revelation, which is, and must be relative to a human religious development is to ask the impossible.

(iv) The older view which puts the whole of the Old Testament in regard to religion and morals on the same level of authority as the New Testament is thus as unsound psychologically as it is dangerous theologically and ethically. Christ alone is the final, perfect revelation of God, and of His will for men, and every deed or word in the Old Testament must be brought to the test of His revelation. What corresponds with His mind remains authoritative; what is inconsistent with that mind must be regarded as of only temporary and local validity. We must not, however, unreservedly condemn all that falls short of the Christian standard. Mankind has learned what is true and right only slowly, and an inadequate truth or an imperfect right must not be condemned as false or wrong. It was true and right relatively to the total conditions of the stage of development then reached. We must treat the imperfections in the morality and religion of wise and good men under the old covenant, not censoriously, but sympathetically and even appreciatively. They did what they could in their day with such light to guide them as that day afforded, and higher praise cannot be given. David, much sinning and yet deeply repenting, might be a man after God's heart in his own self-judgment as well as the judgment of his fellows. Samson might be lauded as a national hero, despite the defects of his moral character, and the, for us, blameworthy ways in which he showed his hostility to the enemies of his own people.

(v) If the question be asked, why this slow



evolution, why did God not make men wise and good all at once? Why must the quest of truth be beset by so much error, and the struggle for right by so much wrong? We must confess that the problem is not fully soluble. Sin has been a perverting and corrupting factor in human history. But that is not a complete explanation. Evolution is God's creative method; growth is the law of all life. Even if God could have created otherwise, He has not. Can we not see a gleam of light? God does not finish life, mind, personality by His own omniscience and omnipotence. He makes His creatures partners in His creative work. It may be that only by self-development could rational, moral, social, and spiritual personality come to be at all.

(4) These general considerations, which the teacher may impart to his scholars in answer to their questions as they become capable of understanding them, may be illustrated by a few concrete instances.

(i) It is probable that Balaam's ass and Jonah's whale have been more used by a vulgar scepticism to cast ridicule upon the Bible than any other instances it may offer of what appears incredible and unintelligible. Even if we accept the record (Numbers xxii. 22-35) regarding Balaam as trustworthy—and in estimating this we must remember the long interval between event and record—the tradition can have begun only with Balaam himself. So regarding it, the story is psychologically probable. In certain psychical conditions, especially of religious excitement, men see visions and hear voices; their own doubts, fears, questions, hopes, aims,

wishes, become objectified in hallucinations of sense. They visualise what they have imagined, they hear what they have thought. So explained, the story can be used as an illustration of how conscience rebukes and restrains, and how needful it is to heed its warnings.

(ii) It has already been mentioned that the book of Jonah is not a prophetic book; it is a tale told about a prophet long after the date when it is probable that he lived (II. Kings xiv. 25). We cannot fit the story into any known historical setting. It is now generally agreed by scholars that it is not to be taken literally, but regarded as a parable or allegory, teaching the most precious truth, that God cared for the heathen world, wanted His people to be His missionary to it, and would judge it if it failed in its mission. It is probably a protest of a more liberal tendency against Jewish exclusiveness.

(iii) If Elijah and Elisha taught, as did later prophets, by figurative language, symbols, parables, allegories, some of the stories about them which now cause us most difficulty may be misrepresentations by popular tradition of such teaching. Ezekiel's vision of the Valley of Dry Bones (xxxvii. 1-18) would by very few, if any, scholars, be taken literally. Why may we not explain Elijah's experience at Horeb (I. Kings xix. 8-13) either as a symbolic account of an inward experience, or as an objectification even for himself in outward vision and voice of inward processes? This explanation does not in any of these cases—Balaam, Elijah or Ezekiel—exclude the communication by God of His

message; it is only a question of the means which God may be pleased to use for His own ends. It is probable that it was by means of such outward signs that the prophet received the certainty that God's message was coming to him. We have yet much to learn from psychology regarding the psychical conditions of the immediate contact and intimate communion of the soul of man with the Spirit of God. If a teacher finds no difficulty in taking any of the narratives literally, I do not wish to press this explanation upon him; it is offered only to relieve the difficulty of those who, because they cannot take the narrative literally, find themselves unable to teach such a lesson at all. In accordance with the principle already laid down, the teacher must exercise his discretion as to whether such an explanation can be offered to his scholars, or may be reserved till they can understand it.

(iv) Passing reference has already been made to the sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis xxii), but this instance of a moral difficulty may be more closely examined. At a certain stage in the evolution of the family, where its solidarity was a condition of its security, the father's authority was absolute; his children were his to do with as he pleased. In China to-day exposure of unwanted children, or even infanticide is not condemned. As the father might do what he pleased with his children, so might God demand anything from His worshippers. The greater the value to the offerer of what he offered in sacrifice, the more acceptable would that sacrifice be to God. To offer a child was not only legitimate, but laud-

able, the highest proof of piety. Although Jephthah did not intend to offer his daughter, his only child, yet as the fulfilment of his vow demanded it, he did so sacrifice her (Judges xi. 29-40). As late as the time of Micah the prophet could represent the people as asking: "Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" (vi. 7). It was in accordance with the religious beliefs and customs of his time and surroundings that Abraham should regard the promptings of his own heart to give his very best as God's command, and for this desire he is to be commended. It is an instance of the progressiveness of revelation that he was taught that this was not required of him. The teacher, after having so explained the story, might well add, that God who does not require such a sacrifice, has Himself given His Son to be the Saviour of men through His own sacrifice. The moral difference between the sacrifice of another and self-sacrifice might then be expounded.

(v) The inclusion of a lesson on Samson in one of the courses was very strongly objected to by the Superintendent of a Sunday School. It was never intended that Samson should be presented as a model for imitation by the scholars. What is admirable in him should be emphasised—his good-humour, his courage, his devotion according to the light he had to his country and his God. That a strong man physically may be a weak man morally, that a man who was brave in danger might be cowardly before temptation—these are truths that can and should be taught to boys especially.

(vi) The war undoubtedly made many teachers very sensitive to the dangers of a narrow patriotism, and less than just to the heroes of the Old Testament, whose motive was such a patriotism. The universalism of Christ needs to be taught, but patriotism need not be unreservedly condemned, for there is a patriotism which is not inconsistent with, but has been purified and elevated by Christian universalism. But this Christian universalism, partially anticipated in the Old Testament, was the late product of a slow process, and there are even now Christians who have not learned all that it involves; and there must be just judgment of those before Christ's coming whose patriotism fell so far short of the Christian standard. We must honour them for what they dared, suffered, and achieved from love of their country. Again, it was on the field of battle, in deeds of martial prowess that that patriotism was usually displayed. However much we may hate war, and condemn it as not Christian, we must recognise that the human conscience has not condemned war always, and has even approved it. We must not allow ourselves to depreciate the fine qualities that have been shown in war. Many a story in the Old Testament will give the teacher the opportunity of showing what Christian patriotism is, and what are the fields of service and sacrifice in which to-day it can best be exercised.

(vii) How are the earlier chapters of Genesis to be regarded? "I can never imagine," says Bishop Gore, "how people so long supposed that these early chapters were a historical record of actual events as

they occurred. They are plainly folk-lore, such as mostly lies behind human history. There was no garden in Mesopotamia at a particular date with a particular man and woman, and a serpent and certain wonderful trees. But can we be so ignorant as not to know that mankind has been taught through myth and fable and legend, at least as often as by accurate history? These early stories of Genesis have their root in a folk-lore which is found also recorded in the Babylonian tablets " (Sermon on *The Fall of Man*). What does this story then teach us? " It asserts not only that particular men or women have done wrong and reaped the penalty of wrongdoing, but that back behind all these particular sins and sinners somehow humanity—human nature as a whole—has gone wrong " (*Ibid*). Thus the story is an attempt to explain a fact of universal human experience, in such a way as was possible at the time. When taken up into the record of revelation it was transformed; the moral and religious fact that sin is both distrust of God's goodness and disobedience to His commandment was emphasised. With young children the story can be told without such explanation; with the older scholars it will not lose, but gain in interest if the teachers explain how what was originally a polytheistic myth was so changed as to convey the truth about man's dependence on, and obligation to God. It presents the tragedy of man's history, that, whether we lay more stress on physical heredity, or more on social inheritance, sin has found so sure a lodgment in the life of the whole race, that only the redeeming grace of

God can prevail against it. "Where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly" (Romans v. 20). The modern view of the story does not in any way lessen, but enhances its moral and religious significance.

(viii) If a teacher is constrained by his study of the subject to the conclusion that the events connected with the Exodus can be explained as natural occurrences, which in course of time, as the tradition passed from generation to generation, were invested with a supernatural character, he need not assume that the narratives have lost their value, and that he cannot any longer deal with them. That such heightening of the wonder was inevitable follows from the normal working of the human mind in dealing with such matters. Accordingly there is no ground for any suspicion as to the good faith of those who transmitted, and those who wrote down the traditions. We can gratefully and reverently recognise God's Providence in nature and history in events which further His purpose, even if their miraculous character should not be proved. The "guiding hand" of God directed the leader of this enterprise, so that even natural occurrences served the ends God had appointed. Is not this a view to be put before the older scholars, which on the one hand relieves intellectual difficulties in regard to miracles, and on the other confirms the faith in the constancy of God's providence in the world and man. While I am ready to accept the record of a miracle, when the evidence is adequate, yet I so conceive God's immediate relation to nature and



history that I recognise God's activity no less in natural than in supernatural events.

(5) The difficulties which the teacher may meet with are not all of the same kind, and cannot all be dealt with in the same way. Sometimes it is the recognition of the literary character of a passage, as poetical, symbolic, parabolic which gives relief. Sometimes it is an examination of the historical value of a record—whether myth, legend, tradition, or contemporary evidence, which will show how it is to be handled. Sometimes psychology will come to our aid, as in explaining the abnormal psychical conditions of seeing visions and hearing voices which often accompanied the prophetic consciousness. What must be guarded against is the too common assumption that all the Old Testament must be taken literally as plain prose, however unintelligible and incredible the results of such an assumption may be. The Old Testament as a library of human literature, extending over many centuries of a nation's history, shows all the variety of form that is common in literature. That it is also a record of a divine revelation does not forbid our recognition of that variety, for God is not confined to the manner of the textbook of history, ethics, or theology, but speaks by divers portions and in divers manners, and so fulfils Himself in many ways.



## CHAPTER VII.

### Suggestions for Further Study.

**W**ITHIN the space at my disposal it has been possible for me only to introduce the readers to the subject. It is to be hoped that the interest of some will have been sufficiently aroused to make them desire further study. Accordingly this last chapter is added to guide such readers.

What such a study embraces may be learned from *A Guide to Biblical Study*, by Dr. A. S. Peake (Hodder and Stoughton, 1897). The five main branches may be described as linguistic and textual, critical, exegetical, historical and theological. How the Revised Version, with its margin, may be used for the first purpose has already been indicated. (i) The second method of study is sometimes described as the *Higher Criticism*, with a hostile bias to suggest that the modern scholar is out for fault-finding only, and that he claims to be a "superior person." But the term *criticism* is used in the strictly etymological sense as meaning *the exercise of judgment* on all the problems of date, authorship, occasion, purpose, literary character, historical value of the writings which may arise in contrast with *the acceptance* of traditions, untested and unproved in these matters. This criticism is called *higher* only in contrast with the textual criticism, which deals with the readings in various manuscripts as the *lower*.

The books which present the conclusions of this exercise of judgment are generally described as *Introductions to the Old Testament*; but one of the best of them, that by the late Dr. Bennett, bears the title, *A Primer of the Bible* (Methuen and Co.), and deals with the New Testament as well as the Old.

The late Rev. C. Arnold Healing, M.A., who was a useful and honoured member of the British Lessons Council, has written a very good Introduction under the title, *The Old Testament; Its Writers and Their Messages* (J. W. Butcher).

A more advanced treatment of the subject is to be found in Dr. Gray's *A Critical Introduction to the Old Testament* (Duckworth and Co.).

The authoritative and exhaustive text-book is *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, by the late Dr. Driver (T. and T. Clark).

Should any reader desire to follow the controversy which has been waged about these questions, he should begin with W. Robertson Smith's *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church* (A. and C. Black), go on to George Adam Smith's *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament* (Hodder and Stoughton), and then he can turn to learn what the traditional view has to oppose to the critical in John Smith's *The Integrity of Scripture* (Hodder and Stoughton).

What is to be noted is that the critical writers are no less firm and warm evangelical believers and preachers than the traditional. It is shown to be an absolutely baseless assumption that to hold the

critical position is to abandon the Gospel of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(ii) For the exegetical study of the books of the Old Testament there is the complete series of volumes in the *Century Bible* (T. C. and E. C. Jack), and also the *Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges* (Cambridge University Press). Many of the books of the Old Testament also are dealt with in the series of *Handbooks for Bible Classes and Private Students*, published by T. and T. Clark. For those who can read Hebrew, and desire a minute study of the text, nothing can compare with the *International Critical Commentary* (T. & T. Clark).

An extraordinary achievement is *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*, in one volume (T. C. and E. C. Jack) which "is designed to put before the reader in a simple form, without technicalities, the generally accepted results of Biblical Criticism, Interpretation, History and Theology." Although it has been vehemently denounced as dangerous and pernicious, the Editor himself and many of the contributors are ardent exponents of the evangelical theology of Christ and Christ Crucified, and show that there is no incompatibility between even advanced modern scholarship and the Gospel in the New Testament.

(iii) From the critical standpoint F. J. Foakes-Jackson has written *The Biblical History of the Hebrews* (W. Heffer and Sons). Although all the volumes in the series called *Men of the Bible* (Jas. Nisbet and Co.) are not written by scholars in the first rank, and there is a diversity of standpoints,

conservative and liberal, yet all are deserving of study. Specially noteworthy are Driver's *Isaiah*, and Cheyne's *Jeremiah. A Sketch of the History of Israel and Judah*. Written from a very advanced critical standpoint by a master hand, is J. Wellhausen's (English translation, A. and C. Black).

(iv) All these studies lead up to the Theology of the Old Testament, the study which seeks to offer a systematic presentation of the teaching in religion and morals of the Old Testament. An early and still valuable sketch is that of Dr. W. H. Bennett: *The Theology of the Old Testament* (Hodder and Stoughton). A more recent and excellent work is Principal H. Wheeler Robinson's *The Religious Ideas of the Old Testament* (Duckworth). Dr. W. T. Davison offers an introduction to the study of the Psalms, mainly the theology, in the volume entitled *The Praises of Israel* (Charles H. Kelly), and also under that title to *The Wisdom-Literature of the Old Testament* (ditto). Most important and interesting is the theology of the prophets. Here the master, W. Robertson Smith, leads the way with his volume on *The Prophets of Israel* (A. and C. Black). A useful handbook is Kirkpatrick's *The Doctrine of the Prophets* (Macmillan and Co.). Great has been the loss that the late Dr. Davidson did not in his own life-time publish his lectures on *The Theology of the Old Testament*, as the posthumous volume edited from his Manuscripts does him serious injustice in the confusion of early and late views, so that we cannot be sure of what was his mature judgment. His article on *Prophecy*, in

Hastings' Bible Dictionary, gives us a foretaste of what such a volume completed by his own hand might have been. The theological articles in this dictionary should in regard to each doctrine be consulted, as they are *multum in parvo*, a condensed and yet comprehensive treatment of each topic. The article by Kautzsch in the *Extra Volume on the Religion of Israel* covers the whole field, and may take the place of several volumes. Dr. Fairweather's article in the same volume on *Development of Doctrine in the Apocryphal Period* links the Old Testament to the New Testament Theology, and corrects the error already alluded to that for four centuries the thoughts of men were left without the guidance of God's Spirit.

(v) The works mentioned are all written from the modern critical standpoint. Nearly all of them, however, are by writers whose theological position may be described as liberal evangelical. How can these be reconciled? This question is answered in the books now to be mentioned. In the book entitled *The Oracles of God* (Longman, Green and Co., 1891), the late Dr. Sanday discusses the "nature and extent of Biblical Inspiration," and also "the Special Significance of the Old Testament Scriptures at the present time." More fully are all the questions involved discussed by the late Dr. Marcus Dods in his book *The Bible; Its Origin and Nature* (T. and T. Clark), in which he deals with the topics of *Revelation, Inspiration, Infallibility*. His conclusion may be quoted. "With the most perfect freedom we can refer to it (the Bible) every

man who is seeking infallible guidance to God" (p. 163). From the most conservative standpoint which a competent modern scholar could hold the late Dr. Orr has formulated a doctrine of *Revelation and Inspiration* in one of Duckworth's *Studies of Theology* series; and yet his claim for the inspiration of the Bible rests on similar ground. "It leads to God and to Christ; it gives light on the deepest problems of life, death, and eternity; it discovers the way of deliverance from sin; it makes men new creatures; it furnishes the man of God completely for every good work" (pp. 217, 218). If this be, as it is, the essential significance and intrinsic value of the Bible, it is not affected in the slightest degree by the differences between the traditional and critical views; and those who disagree on those questions may join with one accord in their appreciation of the moral and religious treasure which it is to all Christians.

My own view on the subject I have set forth more fully than could be done in the first chapter of this volume in my article on *Revelation* in Hastings' *Bible Dictionary; Extra Volume*.

A true view of Revelation and Inspiration can so remove the difficulties which many teachers now feel in dealing with the Old Testament, that the Old Testament lesson will come not as a burden, but a boon; and thus its worth for the moral and religious thought and life of both teachers and scholars be enhanced. For this end alone have these pages been written; and may God speed them on their errand!

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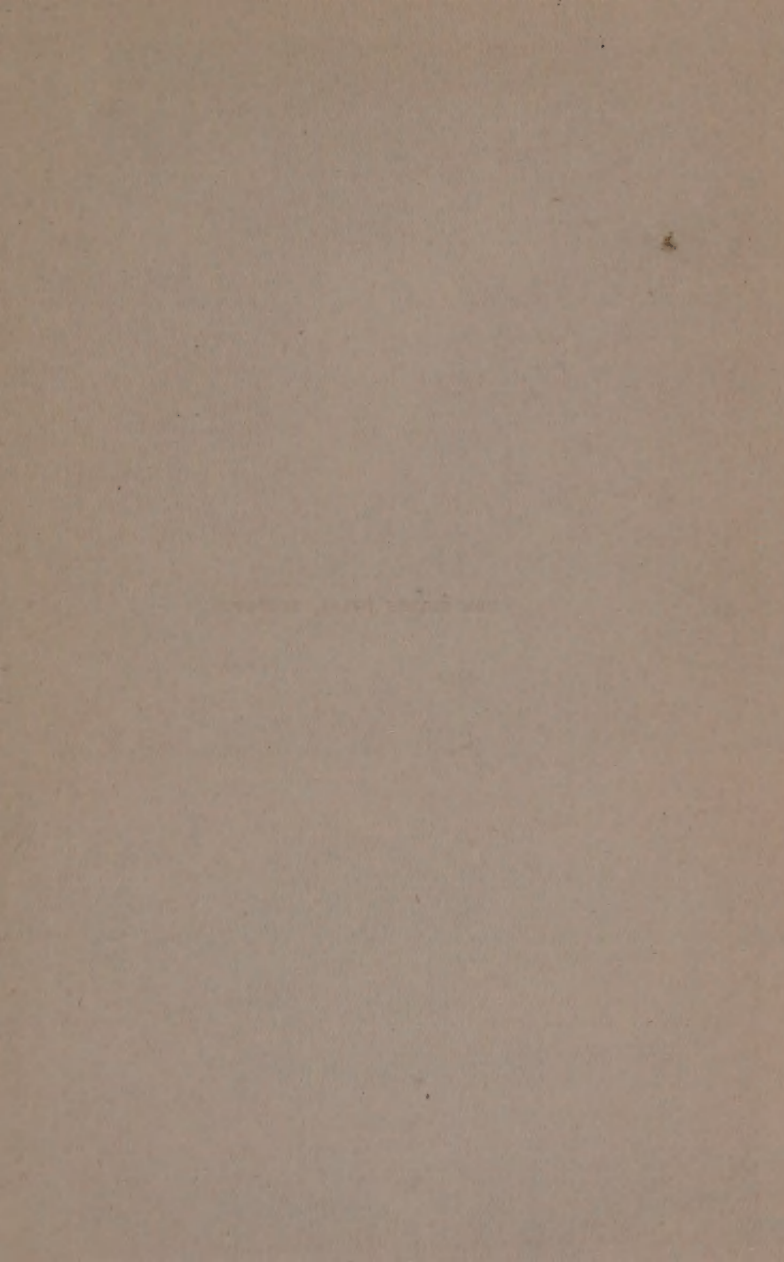
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